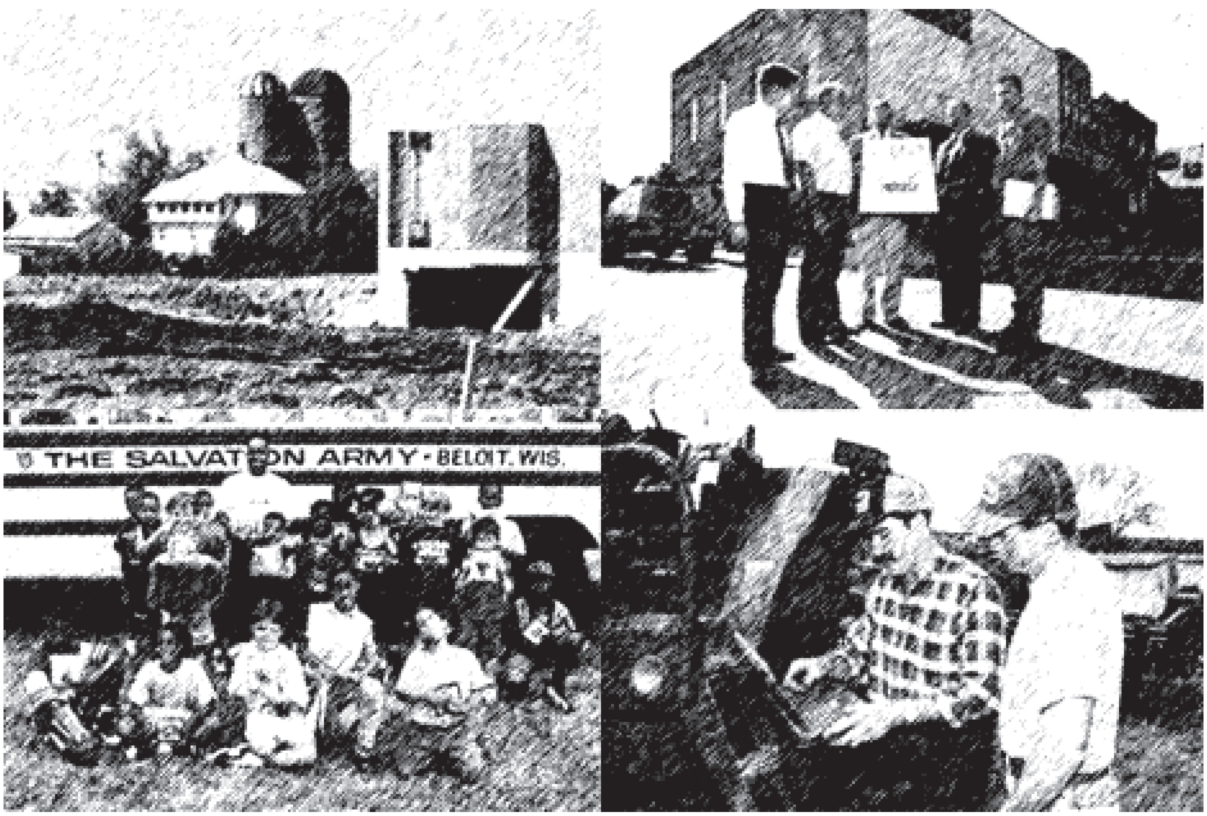
Guidelines For Program Priority Setting 2000-2004



UW Extension
Cooperative Extension
University of Wisconsin-Extension

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Introduction to Statewide Program Planning

Program planning is central to the educational mission of University of Wisconsin-Extension.

It is the formal process we use to:

- Identify local and statewide programming needs
- Develop new educational initiatives
- Evaluate our ongoing educational efforts
- Show impact and improve programs

Cooperative Extension as an organization regularly plans its course for the future by taking time to ask citizens for their views on local concerns. We use this information to set local educational priorities, create new initiatives and guide state program decision-making. This collegial effort involves active dialog and coordination among both internal and external Extension partners.

Statewide Program Planning Calendar

January-April 1999
Program Planning Overview for State Specialists
Specialists Obtain External Partner Input
Specialists/Work Teams Conduct Subject Area Trends

May 1999
UWEX Statewide Meeting (May 11-13, 1999)
- Professional Development for Planning Process
- Distribute *Guidelines fo Program Priority Setting*
- Provide Subject Area *Trends Analysis* to Counties

Program Planning Training for County Department Heads

June-September 1999
County Statewide Program Planning Activities
County Issues Reported on the Internet (September 30, 1999)*
Training for Work Team Coordinators

October-December 1999
Trends and Concerns Analysis Group Meets
Work Group Program Planning
Draft Work Group Plans on the Internet*

January-March 2000
County Priority Setting
County Priorities on the Internet*
Work Group Program Plans on the Internet*
Report Statewide Priorities Bases on Planning Activities

* There will be Internet links to these sites from the Program Development and Evaluation home page at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/statewide.html

Statewide Program Planning Will . . .

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of Cooperative Extension programs both at county and campus levels by targeting citizen needs
- Lead to a better understanding of the local programming environment, creating a context for making good programming decisions
- Lend credibility to the programming decisions that we make individually, and as an organization
- Build strong collegial relationships among faculty and staff around the state
- Encourage the creation and strengthening of relationships with our internal and external partners and stakeholders, and identify new diverse clientele
- Provide information that supports new resource requests or the reallocation of existing organizational resources
- Allow us to effectively tell the story of Extension's accomplishments

Program Development Is . . .

Program development is an ongoing dynamic process that Extension professionals intuitively follow as they plan, implement and evaluate their educational programs. The process is not confined to a four-year planning cycle. It is applied on a small scale as an individual workshop is being developed, on a larger scale as a series of programs are being developed around a single priority and on an even larger scale as a county office unit or a statewide team sets priorities and defines a plan of action for a four-year period. The basic principles remain the same, only the scope is different.

Program development involves:

- Analyzing the situation or context
- Setting priorities
- Designing an action plan
- Implementing the plan
- Evaluating inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts

The program development process is ongoing and continuous. Each educational initiative, workshop or event we carry out modifies the initial situation. As a consequence, any plan of action continues to evolve and change as the situation or context changes.

Given the very fluid nature of the program development process, it can be argued that multiyear action plans are of limited value because the situation and priorities dramatically change over a four-year period. However, a well documented action plan can serve as a solid foundation or as a map on which an initial course can be charted and the journey begun. As conditions change, the course can be altered. The map or action plan becomes a very important vehicle for communicating with key stakeholders, collaborators and colleagues about our destination and why we are taking a particular route. It also becomes a very important means of involving them in setting the initial course and in altering the course as conditions change.

In simple terms, “situational analysis” is drawing a map that identifies the major needs and assets, “priority setting” identifies the destinations to be targeted and “designing the action plan” is setting the course. Throughout the journey, the details of the map may change, the destination may change and the course of action may change. In spite of the changes, the map helps us keep track of where we have been and where we intend to go next. Of equal importance is its value in involving our stakeholders in charting the course and thus achieving a sense of mutual ownership of our educational program initiatives.

The model of the program development cycle on the following page is a guide to the major steps in the process. A number of questions that should be addressed during the process are identified for each phase. The materials presented in this document will help you carry out the situational analysis and the priority setting process. Materials are not included in this document on program design, implementation or evaluation.

Section 6 of this document provides further information on situational analysis. Section 8 provides further information on the priority setting process. The appendixes provide case examples and tools that can be useful in carrying out your situational analysis and priority setting.

Situational analysis and priority setting are identified as two separate and distinct steps in the program development process. At the conclusion of the situational analysis process, we need to have sufficient time to check out the availability of local and statewide resources before we publicly make a commitment to a specific priority. In addition, the local needs and concerns need to be shared on a statewide basis. They, in turn, will influence the priorities and the action plans of the statewide teams. The availability of resources from the statewide teams will then influence the identification of priorities and action plans at the local level. When Extension program priorities have been identified, they need to be broadly communicated within the community. Community needs that are identified, but not addressed by Extension program priorities, should also be communicated to other agencies and organizations within the community.

The calendar identified on page 4 provides sufficient time for statewide teams and county offices to explore the availability of resources before public commitments are made to specific priorities. In some cases, resources may not be available on a statewide basis. In those cases, county offices may choose to proceed with a local priority with the understanding that statewide support is not currently available.

Program Development Cycle

Situation Analysis (Map) ***What are the current needs and assets?***	Priority Setting (Destinations) ***What do we focus on?***	Action Plan (Course) ***What do we plan to do and when do we do it?***	**Implementation**		
What is the purpose of situation analysis and who will use the results? Who is involved and what process do we use? What data is needed? What resources are needed? Who is involved in the analysis and interpretation of the data? How will our analysis be communicated?	Who is involved and what process do we use? What are our institutional mandates, vision, and mission? How will the availability of local and state resources (staff and financial) influence the priority setting process? What can we do given our mandates, resources, potential, etc.? How will our priorities be communicated?	How do we better understand the context and background of the priority? What are our expected **impacts**? Who are our target audiences and what does each need to be able to do, know, practice, etc. (**outcomes**)? What are the activities, materials, products, etc. that are developed for each target audience? (**outputs**) How will they be sequenced? What is our timeline? What resources are needed? (**inputs**) What benchmarks will we identify to mark our progress?	*Inputs*	*Outputs*	*Outcomes / Impacts*
Evaluation					

Commitment to Diversity

Cooperative Extension Statewide Program Planning is designed to include a range of perspectives, expertise and values of all county residents. To meet the educational needs of traditionally under-represented groups, people who are specifically protected by civil rights laws are invited to participate at every stage in the educational process. Our communities are enriched by this diversity, and we are committed to providing educational leadership in this area.

County Extension offices should undertake a strategic and systematic approach to involving people from diverse racial/ethnic groups, ages, abilities, geographic regions and interests during program planning, development and outreach. The diversity of the community should be carefully considered when choosing a planning advisory committee, key informant or community-wide survey recipient. A matrix to help local county offices determine the diversity profile of their community is included in Appendix 1.

Focus on Situational Analysis

Examining Community Needs and Assets

Assets, Needs or Both?

Identifying needs is the first thing one usually thinks of when beginning to plan an Extension program. We know that if we develop a program based on our own idea, one person's suggestion or data from a national study without first determining the needs of our local audience, there is a good chance the program will not be relevant, well attended or easy to justify to decision makers. For decades the concept of needs assessment has served us well. Why then have we heard so much of late about asset mapping and asset or strength-based programming? Are these approaches intended to replace needs assessment or change the way we use needs assessment in our programming? Let's consider the assets approach and then you decide how to incorporate these ideas in your approach to program planning.

What Is Asset-Based Programming?

What are assets and what is an assets approach? Assets are attributes and resources of individuals, families, associations, organizations, communities and places that add quality to or promote positive development. Individual assets may include skills, experience, knowledge, values, etc. Family assets might include communications and support systems. Assets of associations and organizations might include the competence of personnel, farms, industry, recreation, facilities, financial resources, policies, programs, etc. Communities also have economic assets represented by local businesses, income, jobs, etc. and environmental assets represented by open spaces, natural habitat, landscape features, wildlife, etc. The core feature of an asset-based programming approach is a belief that effective programming is founded on individual, family, organization and community assets. Such programming efforts incorporate attention to:

- On-going processes for identifying, linking, developing and

Prepared by Boyd Rossing, Community Development Specialist, School of Human Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

using assets of local participants and their community

- Fostering confidence, optimism and positive self-images of participants and community by recognizing assets

- Building relationships between parties with complementary assets

- Empowering local participants based on self-assurance in their assets to tap and use external resources that can contribute to their local goals

Two central benefits of asset-based programming are that it:

- Creates positive motivation among participants and fosters connections and relation building that commit local citizens to action to improve their lives and their community

- Generates greater possibilities for change, improvement and sustained impact because it is grounded in local citizens who know their local capabilities, apply those capabilities and draw on external resources judiciously

Why Did This Approach Surface?

An emphasis on asset-based programming has arisen as a counter to the historic emphasis on providing services to address needs or deficits. The reasoning goes like this. When an agency conducts a process that culminates in a list of needs or problems, potential program participants tend to see themselves as dependent on agency services, as clients or consumers. This dependence on agencies or outside resources and expertise undermines neighbor to neighbor linkages. For clientele or communities with many needs, a self-image as needy and deficient can result. As agencies proliferate with mandates to address specific needs, efforts to improve lives of citizens and conditions of communities become fragmented.

Thus a variety of asset-based approaches for programming at the individual, family and community level has arisen. These approaches give greater emphasis to capacities of citizens and communities. They seek to shift agencies and providers toward roles that support and augment local capacities and that empower local citizens to become agents of their own destinies. Asset approaches are closely allied to strategies that emphasize prevention of problems rather than remediation of problems after they occur. Preventive approaches seek to identify and strengthen local assets and conditions that support positive development of individuals, families, organizations and communities much as a healthy habitat supports a thriving wildlife community.

So What About Needs?

Persons advocating an assets approach take different positions on whether to continue identifying needs or deficits. A common sense approach for Extension educators indicates that giving attention to both assets and needs makes the best sense. Clearly individuals and communities have needs and wish to have them addressed. It does not serve learners well to gloss over needs or problems by implying that all is well after inventorying ones assets. Nor does it serve the interest of local citizens in this changing world to conclude that one can or should preserve the status quo by continuing on the path indicated by one's historic assets. And for most communities, it is unrealistic to call for total self-reliance on local resources apart from any need for external resources.

A Balanced Approach of Assets and Needs—How So?

Perhaps the key to achieving greater balance in Extension's attention to assets and needs is to simply be sure to incorporate attention to asset identification in one's future program planning and implementation. Any programming situation can benefit from this addition. Of course situations differ and programming purposes and time frames vary. As a general consideration, try to incorporate asset identification early before needs assessment, in situations where historically deficits have been emphasized while assets were overlooked. This early emphasis is also recommended in situations where one is bringing diverse citizens together to create a broad sense of direction for sustained action. Identification and recognition of assets of citizens and their organizations can foster positive relationship building and a sense of confidence in the capacity of the initiative to achieve results. Conversely while asset identification is recommended at some point, it may not be as important to treat it as an early priority in situations where local citizens have well recognized assets or where attention to immediate pressing needs is necessary.

What Are Some Methods for Identifying Assets?

Individual and family assets. There are two basic approaches for identifying assets of individuals and families. The first is to engage local citizens in identifying assets based on their own experience and interpretation. This can occur through surveys, paired interviews, individual interviews, family sessions, community forums and other methods. The emphasis is on helping individuals identify their own assets and on engaging participants in helping each other identify assets. The second is to use established inventories based on developmental models. Assessments of assets are made according to the categories of the model. The work of the Search Institute is an example of this approach. These models can also be applied through surveys, interviews, forums, etc.

Assets of associations and organizations. Identifying organizational assets is less time consuming. Typically a steering committee or a larger forum identifies local associations and organizations and the assets they possess in terms of member talents, facilities, equipment, land, programs and services, etc. A key consideration in inventorying assets at this level is to consider how accessible the assets are to a local initiative and how such access can be increased. You can also work with individual organizations to consider their assets more fully. Extension or other resources on healthy organizations can be a source of useful frameworks for these assessments.

Community assets. Lastly, assets can be identified at the level of the community. Again a steering community or larger forum is usually quite effective in identifying community assets. One type of community asset is the mediating systems that bring citizens across the community together or connect them for collective action, governance, socialization/recreation or communication. A second type of community asset is the variety of existing and latent economic resources and enterprises that can produce raw materials, value-added products and services for local consumption or for export outside the community or funds for local investment. A third type of asset is the natural and human constructed environmental base of the community including land, water, wildlife vegetation and other natural resources and infrastructure for transportation, communications, waste management, energy and so forth. You can turn to emerging models in the community or sustainability indicators for helpful frameworks.

After Assets Are Identified, Then What?

Many Extension educators have made the shift toward identifying and tapping local assets. In some cases, surveys, focus groups or forums generate long lists of assets or show the status of assets that are important to individual or community development. The challenge that then arises is how do we use this information. The key is to engage local citizens in recognizing the assets they possess and allowing the significance of these resources to sink in. There are many ways such information can be used and it is up to the ingenuity of local citizens to identify and capitalize on some of those possibilities. For example:

- As assets are identified, suggest ways to link the person or organization with an asset to another individual or organization that can use it. Considerable satisfaction and empowerment occurs when local citizens have their assets recognized and called on.

- Consider the latent potentials for local assets (e.g. vacant lots, etc.) and ways to convert them into positive uses.

- As needs are identified, consider what local assets can be tapped to address those needs.

- After identifying goals or a larger vision for change, consider how the local assets can contribute to achieving these directions.

- Develop strategies for building assets of individuals, families, organizations and the community that will strengthen the recipients and create a more supportive climate for others.

So What Do You Think?

As you discuss the approach you will use for the 2000-2004 Cooperative Extension program planning process, consider how asset identification can be incorporated. You may need to invent your own method for identifying assets or you may be able to use or adapt a method in the literature.

Situational Analysis— Building Involvement and Ownership

A "situational analysis" done at the local or the statewide level should be carried out in a manner that builds a better understanding of the context or situation for all stakeholders in a community. The community may be a county geographic unit or it may be a statewide community of interest, such as, the dairy industry.

The objective is to build a foundation for good decision making on program priorities and the use of limited resources on a local or statewide basis.

Our programmatic needs are better served if the community we serve feels that they have been meaningfully involved in:

- Gathering the data
- Analyzing and interpreting the data
- Identifying community needs and assets
- Selecting critical community needs and concerns
- Communicating the results

Greater involvement leads to a greater sense of ownership of the process. Greater ownership leads to a stronger commitment to the priorities that are identified in the priority setting process.

Extablishing the Process of Situational Analysis:

- What is the purpose of situational analysis and who will use the results?
- Who is involved and what process do we use?
- What data exists?
- What data is needed?
- What resources are needed?
- Who is involved in the analysis and interpretation of the data?
- How will our analysis be communicated?

Questions for Situational Analysis:

- What are the major issues and concerns facing people in the county?

- What are the major challenges facing youth, families, business, industry, environment, agriculture, government, schools, etc. in the next year, next five years, next 10 years?

- What major strengths/capabilities/assets exist to improve the quality of life and work in the county?

- What are the positive things about the quality of life and work that we want to preserve?

- What are the negative things about the quality of life and work that we want to change?

- What major statewide and national trends will impact the economy and the quality of life within the county?

- Under ideal circumstances, what do you want our community/county to look like within the next five years?

Communicating about Situational Analysis

Communicating broadly helps to build involvement and ownership. While we often think about communicating **after** an event to broadcast the results, it is also advantageous to communicate early in order to explain and build commitment to the process.

Consider various ways you might communicate with key stakeholders and the county population to encourage participation in the situational analysis and to gain visibility for the Extension effort.

News releases have multiple benefits. They:

- Create awareness that Extension undertakes a comprehensive planning effort every four years

- Show that Extension is interested in local issues and concerns

- Enhance Extension's visibility

- Motivate people to participate (If you are undertaking a countywide survey, this may be particularly important.)

When writing a news release, say *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and *how* in the first paragraph, if you can. Study your newspaper and notice how deftly most writers work that type of information into the first paragraph of each article. In addition, it is helpful if you remember the following:

- Know your contact's name, title, telephone, fax and department.

- Mail or fax your release 10 days in advance of the release date.

Don't limit your news releases to just the traditional media—newspapers, radio and television. Consider other venues that will get your information to your targeted audience. These might include organizational newsletters, trade publications, etc. Sample news releases are shown in Appendix 6.

Using UW-Extension Trends Analysis Documents

Cooperative Extension teams, theme groups and program areas have prepared trend analysis documents on the following topics:

1 Community Development Aimed at Sustainability
2 People and the Environment
3 Public Economics and Local Governance
4 Organizational Development Demand
5 Commercial Fruit Crops
6 Emerging Farm and Agriculture Markets
7 Farm Management Education
8 Grain Cropping Systems
9 Forage Crop Production and Utilization
10 Land Use and Agriculture
11 Risk Management
12 Wisconsin's Sheep and Lamb Industry
13 Vegetable Crops
14 Beef Cattle
15 Nutrient Management
16 Swine
17 Dairy
18 Urban Horticulture
19 Youth Decision-Making
20 Agricultural Trends Affecting Youth
21 Youth and the Arts
22 Growing Up in a Changing Society
23 Youth and Employment
24 Youth—Culture, Media, Values and Ethics
25 Youth Health
26 Web -Based Technology and Learning for Youth
27 Youth Violence
28 Natural Resources and Environmental Education for Youth
29 Civic Involvement and Community Perception
30 Linking Youth and Community Development
31 Food Safety
32 Increasing Importance of Managed Care Systems in Health Care
33 Increasing Consumer Responsibility in Health Care

34 Changing Expectations for Cross-Generation Caregiving
35 Less Time Invested in Family Life
36 Food Security
37 Changing support Systems for Economically Vulnerable Families
38 Continuing Crisis in Affordable Housing for Low-Income Families
39 Family Financial Well Being
40 Shift to Local Control and Technology for Delivery of Services to Low-Income Families
41 Increasing Local Control of Public Programs that Serve Wisconsin Families

These documents were distributed at the May 1999 All Staff Conference. They are also available on the Internet at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/statewide/trends.html

Overview of Case Examples and Tools for Situational Analysis

Appendix 4 provides case examples of situational analysis that have been provided by our UW-Extension colleagues. Some of the case examples also address the priority setting process. The following case examples are provided:

- Advisory Committees — Linda Heppner, Barron County
- Community-Wide Survey — Arlen Albrecht, Taylor County
- Key Informant Approach — Donna Doll-Yogerst, Oconto County
- Existing Assessments — Tedi Winnett, Kenosha County
- Dual Scan Approach — Dave Such, Sheboygan County

The list of examples is intended only as a starting point. Each case example has its advantages and limitations. You are invited to review all of the examples and to choose an approach or combine approaches to develop a plan that will work most effectively for your county. Check the Internet at www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/statewide/examples.html for additional examples (when they become available) and for feedback from you colleagues on the use of various approaches.

Appendix 5 provides a number of process tools that may be helpful in situational analysis and priority setting. The tools include:

- Nominal Group Technique
- Delphi Technique
- Focus Group Interviews
- Affinity Diagram
- Survey

Many additional tools can be appropriately used in situational analysis and priority setting. Check with your colleagues who have been involved in the Strategic Thinking and Group Facilitation workshops for further information on the tools listed above and for information on additional tools that might be appropriate.

Sharing Results of County Situational Analysis

The results of the county situational analysis (needs and assets) should be broadly shared with stakeholders, collaborators and the general public in your county.

As part of the four-year planning process, counties are also asked to share the results of their local situational analysis on a statewide basis by completing a short form that will available on the Internet at a link from http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/statewide.html

Each county will be asked to briefly identify:

- Who was involved in the county situational analysis?
- How was the diversity of the county reflected in the process?
- What situational analysis models or tools were used in the process?
- What county needs and concerns were identified including brief description?
- What is a relative magnitude or importance of each need or concern that was identified?
- What state and/or local resources need to be available to address the needs and concerns of your county?

The forms to submit this information via the Internet are currently being finalized.

They will be available for county input by August 1, 1999 at a link from http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/statewide.html

By October 1, 1999, needs and concerns from all counties will be available for review on the Internet at a link from http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/statewide.html All county reports will be available for review by colleagues in other county offices, Cooperative Extension teams/theme groups and the general public.

On a statewide basis, the entire list of county needs and concerns will be systematically analyzed by a group of county/campus colleagues. See Section 7.

Communicating the Results of the Situational Analysis

There are many reasons to share the results of the situational analysis for your county.

Share results for all to better understand the local situation:

- Enhance Extension's visibility
- Recognize people who were involved
- Stimulate local interest and participation in addressing county concerns
- Kindle new partnerships and working relationships

Think about the various people and organizations that might be interested in hearing about the results of the situational analysis. In addition to the county oversight committee and county board, these might include:

- State and local public agencies (public health, social services, DNR)
- Nonprofit agencies and organizations (hospitals, churches, lakes associations)
- For-profit agencies or businesses (banks, merchants)
- Civic groups and service organizations
- Agribusinesses
- County, town, village departments and officers
- School administration and boards
- UW-campus partners
- 4-H leaders association
- Local legislators

In addition to news releases, there are other opportunities to share the results of your county situational analysis. Consider the following:

- At organizational/agency meetings and public events
- As a poster or display in a storefront, Extension office or public place
- In Extension newsletters
- During informal conversations

Sample news releases are found in Appendix 6.

County/Campus— Trend/Concerns Analysis Group

During October 1999, a group of county and campus-based Cooperative Extension colleagues will systematically examine all of the identified county needs/concerns and the trend analysis documents prepared by the Cooperative Extension teams, theme groups and program areas. The group will make recommendations on the:

- Scope of collected needs and concerns
- Need for additional resources
- Creation of additional teams/theme groups
- Redirection of current team/theme group efforts
- Study of emerging needs or trends

The recommendations of the group will be provided to the Cooperative Extension Dean's Office, program leaders, members of the existing statewide teams/theme groups and all Cooperative Extension faculty and staff.

Statewide teams/theme groups will, as appropriate, incorporate the groups' recommendations in their plan of work and in the allocation of resources to priorities within the scope of the team/theme group initiative.

The statewide team/theme group plan of work and listing of available resources will be provided in draft form on the Internet at a link from http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/statewide.html by December 31, 1999.

Focus on Priority Setting

Extension Program Priority Setting—Building Involvement and Ownership

Program priority setting builds on the foundation created by the situational analysis. A situation analysis that involved community stakeholders and is “owned” by the community serves as a basis for making decisions on program priorities.

Program priorities need to be established with an understanding of the resources that are available to help achieve the required outcomes and impact. Resources may be local, statewide, national or even international. The availability of resources or lack of resources may be a major factor in selecting Extension program priorities.

In some cases, a major concern at the county level may need to be addressed even though resources are not available. Under those circumstances, the program priority setting process needs to publicly acknowledge the limited resources. Realistic outcomes and accountability measures need to be identified for such initiatives.

Cooperative Extension is a partnership between the federal government, state government and county government. As a partnership, we are obligated to consult with our partners in the identification of program priorities. The Wisconsin State Statutes Chapter 59.56 (3) requires the involvement of a county oversight committee in the identification of program priorities for the local county Extension office.

The county oversight committee, typically the Extension Education Committee of the County Board of Supervisors, is legally obligated to be involved in the priority setting process. The scope of the involvement should be locally determined and formally documented in the records of the committee. The county exective or county administrator may also play an important role in the priority setting process.

Most county oversight committees will determine the program priorities in consultation with the local county Extension staff. Some county oversight committees may also choose to formally involve a citizen advisory committee in the priority setting process. A few county committees may choose to delegate the priority setting process to the staff of the county Extension office. This last option has the potential of a diminished sense of commitment on behalf of the committee and consequentially a lack of public support for the priorities of the local office.

Questions for Priority Setting

- What are the top priorities among the various concerns and needs that were identified during the situational analysis?

- What do we know about these priorities?

- Which of these top priorities match with Extension's mission and mandates?

- Are resources available and/or accessible for addressing these priorities?

- Are we likely to have an impact? What level of impact?

- Is someone else, another group or agency, better equipped to deal with this priority than Extension?

- Who else is already working on this priority? What role or contribution might Extension have? Who might we partner with?

Working Together as a County Office Team

County office units are encouraged to work together to develop a county office plan of work that clearly communicates to local citizens and stakeholders in the county the program priorities and plans for the total county Extension office. Positive public perceptions of the county Extension program are enhanced by a "team approach" that identifies the working relationships among the various program areas and the synergism that results from a multidisciplinary approach to the solution of community problems.

Communicating Program Priorities

Program priorities should be communicated broadly and shared with all your stakeholders, collaborators and constituents. Community needs that have been identified, but are not addressed by Extension program priorities, should be communicated to other appropriate groups, agencies and organizations within the community.

As part of the statewide four-year planning process, counties are asked to share the results of their local priority setting by completing a short form that will available on the Internet.

Each county will be asked to briefly identify:

- Who was involved in the priority setting process?
- What county priorities were identified with brief description?

The forms to submit this information via the Internet are currently being finalized. They will be available for county input by August 1, 1999 at a link from http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/statewide.html

By February 1, 2000, program priorities from all counties should be available for review on the Internet at a link from http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/statewide.html All county reports will be available for review by colleagues in other county offices, by the Cooperative Extension teams/theme groups and by the general public.

Appendix

APPENDIX I
Commitment to Diversity

1. Use this matrix as a tool to identify the diversity available for your county advisory committee and other groups.

2. Identify sub-categories under each main category, based on your county demographics. See the sample on page 35.

3. Involve people that represent the various demographic and value awareness criteria.

4. Definitions:

   - Economic–Aware of income levels, jobs, money use, productivity
   - Environmental–Aware of water, air, soil conservation, resources, etc.
   - Community Services–Aware of the health, fire and police protection, community safety
   - Psychological–Aware of values, aspirations, individual rights, etc.
   - Political–Aware of the political atmosphere, government, power structure
   - Education–Aware of the educational resources, learning, literacy, etc.
   - Social–Aware of community groups, volunteerism, charity

Planning Matrix for Identifying A Diverse Advisory Committee

Demographic Characteristics / Names ➡	Nancy Lee	Bob Kosteke	Fred Harris
Gender			
Female	X		
Male		X	X
Income Level			
< $15,000 / YR	X		
$15 – $25,000 / YR		X	
$25 – $35,000 / YR			
$35 – $50,000 / YR			
> $50,000 / YR		X	
Age			
14 - 20			
21 - 30	X		
31 - 40			
41 - 50			
51 - 60		X	
Over 60		X	
Geographic			
Urban	X		
Suburban			
Rural - Ag	X	X	
Rural – Non Ag			
Family Status			
Single			
Single Parent	X		
Married- No Children			X
Married – w/Children		X	

Chart continues…

**Planning Matrix for Identifying
A Diverse Advisory Committee**

Names ➨ / Demographic Characteristics																						
Gender																						
Race/Ethnicity																						
Age																						
Person w/Disability																						
Geographic Region																						

Chart continues…

Planning Matrix for Identifying
A Diverse Advisory Committee

Names ➨ / Demographic Characteristics																						
Family Status																						
Income Level																						
User/Non-User																						
Volunteer Group																						

Chart continues…

Planning Matrix for Identifying
a Diverse Advisory Committee

Names ➨ / Demographic Characteristics																						
Agency Partners																						
____________																						
____________																						
____________																						
____________																						
____________																						
Economic																						
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Chart continues…

Planning Matrix for Identifying
a Diverse Advisory Committee

Names ➨ / Demographic Characteristics																						
Political																						
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____________																						
____________																						
Educational																						
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Social																						
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Program Area																						
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APPENDIX 2
Identifying, Mapping and Mobilizing Our Assets

Assets, often of untold value, lie within the citizens of our communities, within the groups we form, within our larger organizations, within our land and other physical resources, within our local economy and within organizations and projects that connect us. By recognizing these assets, we reconfirm our own capabilities. Also, we can discover possibilities for mobilizing to meet our interests and needs and fulfill our community aspirations.

These materials will help you recognize the asset base in your county and in the communities within your county. They can be used to generate a quick general picture of your assets, to consider possible applications of those assets to program directions and to prioritize where more in-depth asset identification will be useful.

Assets of Individuals—A Preliminary Assessment Tool

Inventorying the assets of individual members in our communities is a powerful process. The affirmation and discovery that occur are empowering. Individuals are more energized to work collectively and share their assets to effect some community improvements. There are four basic steps in mapping assets of individuals:

- Identify groups of individuals where asset identification might be helpful to the members and/or your programming goals.
- Identify assets of these groups in a general way.
- Consider how these assets link to your program goals.
- Decide if more in-depth first-hand assessment of assets for some of these groups would be helpful and important. Will you use a structured questionnaire or open-ended questions? Decide on the method of asset identification, e.g. survey, interviews, group session, etc.

The following tables provide a way to look at individuals according to various categories that hint at some of their assets. You may identify additional categories. After considering assets at this general level, you will be in a better position to select some groups of individuals where first-hand asset mapping and engagement in program efforts is desirable.

Prepared by Boyd Rossing, Community Development Specialist, School of Human Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

YOUTH			
What are the types of assets youth typically possess?	What assets do youth in our situation possess? (What assets should we try to develop in our youth?)	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of youth assets? If so, how could we do this?
Ideas, Creativity & Energy Connection to Place Dreams & Desires Peer Group Relationships Family Relationships Credibility as Teachers of other Youth Time Other ________________			

SENIOR CITIZENS			
What are the types of assets senior citizens typically possess?	What assets do senior citizens in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of senior citizen assets? If so, how could we do this?
Culture, Tradition & History Experience & Skills Peer Groups Economic Resources Time Other ________________			

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (AND ABILITIES)			
What are the types of assets persons with disabilities typically possess?	What assets do persons with disabilities in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets? If so, which disability groups? How could we do this?
Skills Hospitality Compassion Friendship Resilience & Happiness Inspiration Other ________________			

ETHNIC GROUPS			
What are the types of assets persons of ethnic groups typically possess?	What assets do persons of ethnic groups in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets of ethnic groups? If so, which ethnic groups? How could we do this?
Tradition & History Perspectives on Community Situations Cultural Customs & Pride Relations within Group Credibikity within Group Resilience Other ________________			

PARENTS			
What are the types of assets parents typically possess?	What assets do parents in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets of parents? How could we do this?
Concern for Youth Knowledge of Youth Concerns Family Customs Inter-generational Perspectives Home Places Spouse, Extended Family Relations Other ________________			

INDIVIDUALS IN OCCUPATION GROUPS			
What are the types of assets persons in occupation groups typically possess?	What assets do members of selected occupation groups in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets of occupation groups? If, so which occupations? How could we do this?
Skills, Abilities & Experiences Special Occupational Knowledge Productivity Economic Resources Connections to Occupation Groups/ Organizations Other ________________			

PERSONS OF LIMITED INCOME			
What are the types of assets persons of limited income typically possess?	What assets do persons of limited income in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assess-ment of assets of those of limited income? If so, how could we do this?
Skills, Abilities, Experience Networking & Personal Relationships Desires, Dreams Creativity Resilience Energy & Enthusiasm Other ________________			

CREATIVE, ARTISTIC PERSONS			
What are the types of assets creative, artistic persons typically possess?	What assets do creative, artistic persons in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assess-ment of assets of those of creative/ artistic persons? If so, how could we do this?
Tradition Culture Skills Vision & Creativity Productivity Self-Expression & Self-Esteem Other _________________			

OTHER GROUP ________________________			
What are the types of assets members of _____ typically possess?	What assets do members of _____ group in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assess- ment of assets of ____? If so, how could we do this?
Asset: ________________ Asset: ________________ Asset: ________________ Asset: ________________ Asset: ________________			

OTHER GROUP ________________________			
What are the types of assets members of _____typically possess?	What assets do members of _____ group in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assess- ment of assets of ____? If so, how could we do this?
Asset: ________________ Asset: ________________ Asset: ________________ Asset: ________________ Asset: ________________			

Assets of Associations and Organizations/Institutions—A Planning Outline

Associations and organizations bring people together for group action. They typically accumulate assets that potentially can be tapped for larger community projects. To identify these assets use the following steps:

1. Generate a list of associations for your community or county. Associations are informal, voluntary groups that bring people together to pursue shared interests. An association inventory can be started by a steering committee using their knowledge and then extended by a community forum or by reviewing local newspapers, bulletins, etc. See the examples on page 47.
2. Generate a list of organizations/institutions for your community or county. An organization/institution is a formal government, private/business or non-profit organization with paid staff. To identify organizations, you can start by polling the knowledge of your steering committee and extend it by reviewing telephone or other directories. See the examples on page 47.
3. Identify assets of associations and of organizations in a general way.
4. Consider possible links between the assets of these associations or organizations and your program goals.
5. Consider how accessible the assets of various associations and organizations are to your programming initiatives and how such access could be increased.
6. Decide if more in depth first-hand assessment of assets for some of these associations or organizations would be helpful and important. Will you use a structured questionnaire or open-ended questions? Decide on the method of asset identification, e.g. survey, interviews, group session, etc.

Potential Assets of Associations, Organizations/Institutions	
People with Time, Interests, Skills, etc. Expertise Space Facilities Materials	Equipment Programs Services Financial Resources Purchasing Power

Examples of Associations, Organizations/Institutions

Associations	Organizations/Institutions
Artistic Groups: musical, theater, writing Business Groups: local chamber, local cooperatives Charitable Groups, Drives Church Groups Civic Event Groups: fair, festivals Collector Groups: stamps, flowers Elderly Groups Ethnic Associations Environment/Conservation Groups Health & Fitness Groups: jogging, diet Interest Clubs: books, recycling Local Media: commercial newspaper, radio, cable TV Men's Groups: cultural, political, social, educational, vocational Neighborhood: crime watch, block clubs, neighborhood associations. Organization Support Groups: "friends" of Outdoor Groups: garden, nature watching Political/Citizenship Parties: Democrats, Republicans, League of Women Voters School Groups: PTA, playground Service Clubs: Kiwanis, Rotary Social Cause Groups: peace, civil rights, advocacy Sports Leagues Support/Self-Help Groups: Alcoholics Anonymous, La Leche League Study Groups: literary, Bible Veteran Groups Women's Groups: cultural, political, social, civic, educational, vocational Youth Groups: 4H clubs, Scouts	Agricultural Agencies Banks Businesses Corporations Community Centers Community Development Corporations Conservation Agencies Cooperative Extension Elected Governmental Bodies Energy Utilities Fire Departments Foundations Health Departments, Clinics Hospitals Libraries Museums Newspapers Parks Police Public, Private Schools Radio/TV Recreation Agencies Social Service Agencies Trade Schools UW Centers, Universities Vocational-Technical Schools

Economic Development Assets—A Planning Outline

A central concern in many communities is the challenge of strengthening the local economy. In a healthy local economy, dollars circulate and recirculate. The benefits produced by those dollars are retained within the community. This makes local people better off and makes economic growth possible. Many elements go into local economic development including local purchasing, local hiring, new business creation, development of human productive capacity, physical resource development, local investing, local credit provision and mobilizing external resources. A key to many of these efforts is recognizing local assets that can contribute to the economy. A set of potentially useful asset mapping approaches for economic development is summarized in the table on page 48.

Asset Mapping Approaches for Economic Development

Assess Marketable Individual Capacities	Mapping Consumer Spending	Mapping Local Business Assets
Purpose: To identify skills, abilities and experiences of individuals who can own businesses, work for others, consume knowledgeably, invest locally and work together in community economic building efforts	Purpose: To identify local spending patterns and then to better connect local vendors and people for mutual local economic benefit	Purpose: To find out what businesses exist in your community and determine what capacities for economic development they possess
Types of Capacities	Spending Pattern Information to Collect	Types of Economic Development Capacities
General Skills Formal Work Experiences Entrepreneurial Experiences Training & Educational Experiences Civic or Community-Based Experiences Domestic Experiences	Consumer Patronage of Small Local Businesses Consumer Proximity Expectations Consumer Assessment of Needed Businesses Consumer Interest in Business or Cooperative Start-up Consumer Spending Patterns for Items Purchased on Regular Basis Consumer Spending Patterns for Larger, Less Frequent Expenditures	Local Hiring Local Purchasing Local Investment Local Community Involvement
Steps	Steps	Steps
Define Community Boundaries Target Individuals to Include Decide Asset Mapping Method Self-completed Group administration Individual interviews, face to face or telephone Design Your Instrument Conduct Your Inventory Organize Your Findings Mobilize Capacities	Define Community Boundaries Design Your Survey Instrument Decide Method of Conducting Survey Mail Group Administered Door to Door Telephone Conduct Your Inventory Organize Your Findings Mobilize Consumer Expenditure Capacities Educate local businesses Educate local consumers Promote new businesses	Define Community Boundaries Conduct Inventory of Existing Businesses Design Your Instrument Identify Business Type, Size, etc. Decide Method for Business Inventory Library records First-hand community reconnaissance Conduct Your Inventory Identify Economic Development Capacities of Selected Businesses Design Your Instrument Decide Method Visits to businesses Mail, telephone, survey Organize Your Findings Mobilize Untapped Business Capacities Foster connections for: Job creation & training Employee volunteering Local purchasing Local investment Project sponsorship

Environmental Assets—Natural and Physical Resources

Every community possesses natural and human-made physical structures and resources. Some of these resources are valuable assets when we pay attention to them. Others are potential assets if we convert their neglected or negative use into a positive use. To inventory environmental assets use the following steps:

1. Consider the types of environmental assets listed in the table below.
2. Consider possible links between these assets and your program goals.
3. Identify the types of environmental assets to inventory.
4. Decide the method for mapping environmental assets. Methods for identifying natural/physical features, include use of library, other published information and/or first-hand observation/documentation. To identify how these resources are used, consider user or general surveys by site interview/observations or mail, telephone, etc. surveys and/or analysis of records. The community development capacity of these resources can be identified by user, general population or steering committee survey, discussion or brainstorming.
5. Design instruments, as needed.
6. Conduct your inventory.
   - Identify the asset entities, e.g. spaces, structures.
   - Identify their community development capacities.
7. Organize your findings.
8. Mobilize environmental assets.

The following table identifies types of environmental assets and possible community development applications.

Environmental Assets	Possible Community Development Associations
Water Resources: streams, lakes, groundwater, rainfall	Community recreation
Vegetation	Community businesses
Wildlife	Economic development
Soils, Minerals	Housing
Seasons, Weather	Community gardens
Open Space	Social events
Habitats	Community festivals, celebrations
Aesthetic Resources	Aesthetic appreciation
Cultural, Historic Resources	Nature appreciation
Terrain Features	Wildlife, habitat conservation
Transportation Infrastructure	Cultural centers, museums
Vacant or Under-Used Land, Buildings	Educational centers, events
Waste Resources: food, toxic and non-toxic materials, landscaping	Energy conservation
	Recycling

Summary

Within your community lies a rich set of resources. In most cases communities have only partially realized and tapped the potential of these resources for creating a better community. Applying the simple ideas and methods presented here can help you unleash this potential.

References:

Kretzmann, J. and J. McKnight. 1993. *Building Communities from the Inside Out—A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets.* Chicago, Ill: ACTA Publications.

Kretzmann, J., J.McKnight and G. Sheehan. 1997. *A Guide to Capacity Inventories: Mobilizing the Community Skills of Local Residents.* Chicago, Ill: ACTA Publications.

Kretzmann, J., J. McKnightand D. Puntenney. 1996. *A Guide to Mapping Consumer Expenditures and Mobilizing Consumer Expenditure Capacities*. Chicago, Ill: ACTA Publications.

Kretzmann, J., J. McKnight and D. Puntenney. 1996. *A Guide to Mapping Local Business Assets and Mobilizing Local Business Capacities.* Chicago, Ill: ACTA Publications.

Kretzmann, J., J. McKnight and D. Puntenney. 1996. *A Guide to Mapping and Mobilizing the Economic Capacities of Local Residents.* Chicago, Ill: ACTA Publications.

APPENDIX 3
Key Data Components for Situational Analysis

Excellent data is available from University of Wisconsin-Extension WISPOP Information Resources (http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wispop/) and the Government Information Sharing Project at Oregon State University (http://govinfo.kerr.orst.edu/). Data currently available includes:

- Official Population Estimates for County Municipalities
- Community Profile—The Census Bureau has compiled useful demographic, economic, and governmental information spanning several years and sources for counties.
- Total Personal Income by Type of Income and Earnings by Industry
- Retail TradeGeneral Statistics—Sales, Payroll and Employment
- Wholesale Trade—General Statistics—Sales, Payroll, Expenses, Inventories and Employment
- Service Industries, Taxable—General Statistics—Receipts, Payroll and Employment
- Full-time and Part-time Employees by Industry
- Regional Economic Profile Bureau of Economic Analysis
- Transfer Payments by Type of Payment
- Farm Income and Expenses
- School District Data Book Profiles

Consult the sites listed above and the Program Development Internet page at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/statewide/resource.html for additional sources of data on your community.

APPENDIX 4
Case Examples

A County Advisory Committee
B County Wide Mail Survey
C Key Informant Approach
D Existing Assessments
E Dual Scan Approach

The following case examples are effective ways to involve county stakeholders in the identification of concerns, needs and assets at the local level. Each provides a slightly different way to collect information that helps in setting Extension program direction. Likewise, there are different types of committees or partners for designing and carrying out the situational analysis and priority setting process. A glossary of terms follows:

Oversight Committee: typically the Extension Education Committee of the County Board of Supervisors or other designated committee.

Core Planning Group: works with the county Extension staff to plan and implement the planning process and typically, consists of five to seven people who are knowledgeable of the county, its people and resources, often appointed by the oversight committee.

Design Team: members of the Extension office staff and oversight committee who work together to design and implement the situational analysis.

Whatever the group is called, the important is that the county Extension office takes on the local planning process as a team, as an office unit, and they work with key others in designing and implementing the process. The extent to which these key others are involved in decisions about which approach to use actually helps decide what information to collect, who to collect it from, what the collected information means and it influences the level of local ownership in the process and the final success of the planning effort.

County Advisory Committee

The county advisory committee is a group of county residents selected to represent the variety of backgrounds found in the county population. This group is asked to meet and identify the concerns, needs and assets of the residents of the county that provides direction for the Extension program. Typically the group consists of 20-25 members, including both Extension and non-Extension users.

Description of Process

1. The county oversight committee selects a core planning group that, in turn, facilitates the advisory committee process. The core planning group typically consists of five to seven people and is appointed by the county board chairperson.

2. The core planning group identifies individuals from throughout the county who are invited to serve on the county advisory committee. Individuals are selected who represent the make-up of the county, who are both Extension clientele and non-Extension users, and who are leaders in both the public and private sector. Members should also possess a concern and dedication to improve and strengthen the county, be open-minded and futuristic thinkers, and have the ability to analyze needs, concerns and assets of the county. The Matrix (Appendix 1) can be used to insure a diverse representation.

3. A member of the core planning committee (usually the Extension county department head) and a member of the county oversight committee contacts each individual seeking their involvement as county advisory committee members. (A model letter follows.) The purpose of the county advisory committee is clearly explained and the expectations of the committee described. Members of this committee analyze and review the trends analyses provided by the Extension work teams, other county assessments that have been conducted recently, and provide their own perspectives of county concerns and assets. A meeting time and place are designated.

4. A member of the core planning committee or an Extension staff member facilitates the advisory committee group meeting(s). A nominal group process may be used to identify the county's needs, assets and concerns (the nominal group process and other tools are explained in Appendix 5). The group discusses and clarifies all ideas, notes commonalties and agrees upon a master list of county concerns. At a later date, the advisory com-

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Case Example provided by Linda Heppner, Barron County.

mittee may meet again to prioritize the concerns and provide recommendations for the direction of the Extension program.

Involvement of Oversight Committee

The oversight committee selects the core planning group which, in turn, selects the members of the advisory committee and facilitates the advisory committee process. Results of the county advisory committee meetings are shared with the oversight committee.

Plan for Addressing County Issues

The county Extension office team, along with the oversight committee, determines the appropriate Extension educational response to the prioritized concerns.

Areas for Consideration

The county Extension office team works with the core planning group to provide support and guidance for the advisory committee. The county office makes the UW-Extension trends analysis documents and other sources of data available to the committee. A member of the Extension team may serve as facilitator of the advisory committee.

NOTE: The number of times the advisory committee meets may vary. In the past, program priority setting was often done at the same time as issue identification. Before setting program priorities, however, it is important to assess resource availability and feasibility of impact. Therefore, it may be important to allow some time to elapse between situational analysis—identifying concerns, needs, assets—and priority setting.

Model letter to County Advisory Committee Members

Date

____
____
____

Dear________;

We are pleased to invite you to be a member of the _______ County University of Wisconsin-Extension's Planning Advisory Committee. This committee is charged with identifying concerns facing the residents of ________ County and will be involved in advising the University of Wisconsin-Extension staff concerning the direction of the Extension educational program. Your volunteer commitment to this committee will add greatly to the identification of relevant concerns and assets and will help direct the future of Extension educational programming in ______ County.

As a member of this important committee, you will have the opportunity to assess _______ County needs and assets, review local and state data and discuss issues and concerns facing ________ County with other key county residents. Your involvement in this advisory committee not only benefits _________ County and the direction of Extension's educational programs but you will also benefit by learning about the concerns of our citizens and what can be done in addressing those concerns.

The county advisory committee will hold its first meeting on ____________, at ______ in the __________. A second meeting is scheduled for (month, day of week, time). Each meeting will last no more than two hours. At the first meeting, we will engage in a process to identify the concerns and assets of _______ County. At the second meeting, we will prioritize the concerns and suggest direction for the Extension educational response.

We look forward to your participation and thank you, in advance, for your commitment to this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

County Office Department Head and/or Chairperson of Oversight Committee and/or County Board Chairperson

Identifying Advisory Committee Members

The advisory committee is typically composed of 20 to 30 people—key decision-makers, influential, Extension clientele, non-users of Extension, volunteers, other organizations and other agencies. Larger counties may want a larger group to insure representation from all citizens: geographical areas, program areas, income levels, family status, ages and cultural diversity.

A variety of approaches exist for identifying committee members. The important thing is to ensure that the final group of members represents the diversity of the county including various interests and groups that exist in the county. Refer to the Diversity Matrix in Appendix 1.

1. Reputational Approach

This approach is a way to identify local leaders—the power actors who do not necessarily hold formal positions. It is based on the assumption that knowledgeables know community leaders by their reputations. Power is intangible so the opinions and estimations of knowledgeables can be a measure of the amount of influence local leaders posses. Just observing who holds formal offices or participates in public meetings, board meetings, etc. cannot identify leaders. Some community leaders work behind the scenes to affect local actions and decisions. This procedure involves selecting knowledgeable community members who provide a list of influential individuals who are then ranked according to their reputation for social power in local affairs.

Consider the following guidelines when using the reputational approach:

a. Define the geographical area (in this case, the county).

This is the area in which the leaders are identified.

b. Identify the knowledgeables.

Identify a number of knowledgeables to be interviewed. To get a list of knowledgeables, contact someone very familiar with each community, or geographic sub-area, within the county. The number of knowledgeables to be interviewed varies with the size of the community/sub-area. Suggested numbers follow:

Number of knowledgeables needed	Community/area population
5	250-1000
7	1001-2,500
8	2,501-5,000
10	5,000-10,000

c. Interview knowledgeables.

Once the knowledgeables have been identified, they are interviewed to determine the local leaders. A simple interview questionnaire is developed.

(1) Introduce yourself to the knowledgeable
(2) Explain why you wish to locate the local influential leaders
(3) Ask an opening question such as:

"In many communities, a few people are able to affect the outcomes of issues, sometimes because they are in a position to make key decisions or because they have the ability to persuade others to follow their leadership. Please tell me the names of the five most important and influential leaders in this community who may or may not hold a public office."

OR

"Who are the five people in this community you believe to be the most influential. That is, who can make a project go, or if opposed, probably will stop it?"

(4) Record their responses:

Community leader	Occupation	Place of business/address

d. Determine leaders.

Summarize the names by counting the number of times each person was mentioned. Individuals named the greatest number of times form the pool of community leaders for the advisory committee.

This approach identifies a broad scope of community leaders, both those who are visible and not so visible. The interview process can be done in a fairly short period of time.

[Reference: *Community Needs Assessment Training and Development Handbook.* Kathryn Reinhard, Daniel Murphy, Donald Johnson, Larry Meiller. UWEX-CNRED and UW-Madison, Department of Rural Sociology, nd.]

2. Formal Position Approach

List the many formal leadership positions within the county and the various communities. People in the positions can be approached as potential advisory committee people. The groups for which there are leaders might be:

- County board membership and officers
- Town boards membership and officers
- Village and city council membership and officers
- School boards and president
- Heads of voluntary organizations
- School superintendent
- Agency heads such as SCS, ASCS, district or local DNR representatives
- Vocational school superintendents or directors

From the above list, draw a representative group of 20-30 advisory committee members.

3. Concerns and Events Analysis

Prepare a list of significant community and county events that have occurred over the past two to five years.

Use newspapers and other documents, records or logs to identify the people who were involved in these various community events and activities.

Prepare the list of names.

Select 20-30 persons representative of the various community events and activities.

This approach serves to identify people who are involved in the various spheres and interests in the community. It assumes that different people get involved in different concerns and that leadership and potential advisory committee members are not a part of a single power group.

NOTE: These three approaches are meant to identify local influential leaders and individuals that are involved in county affairs. They may not identify representatives of the "voiceless" or marginal groups in the county population. Refer to the Diversity Matrix (Appendix 1) to ensure that all voices in the county are heard.

County Advisory Committee Job Description

The purpose and role of the county advisory committee is to:

- Identify concerns, needs and assets of residents of the county
- Analyze trend data and other community assessments
- Order the importance of the many concerns that are identified

Support and Guidance

Support and guidance for the advisory committee work comes from the county Extension office staff and members of the oversight committee of the county board of supervisors.

Time Commitment and Timetable

- Advisory committee members are expected to attend two meetings.
- Each meeting will not exceed two hours.
- It is expected that the work of the advisory committee will be completed by _______.

Qualifications

Members should possess the following qualities:

- A concern and dedication to improve/strengthen the county
- An open mind
- Futuristic thinking
- The ability to analyze needs, concerns and assets; integrate data from state trends analyses and rank the importance of identified concerns for the residents of the county

Benefits

Committee members will benefit:

- Through increased awareness of the social, economic and environmental trends affecting local citizens
- By sharing their expertise on how educational programs and efforts strengthen the county
- By sharing information learned with others
- By developing an understanding of the mission of the Cooperative Extension Service and its educational role in the county
- By being involved in collaborative efforts that have the potential of producing major impact

County Wide Mail Survey

A mail survey makes it possible to involve a relatively large number of people in the identification of county concerns and assets. The information obtained gives a picture from the perspective of the respondents at a particular point in time.

The county oversight committee and county Extension office staff select the county residents to be the survey sample. The county office staff designs the questionnaire. Finally, the county faculty and staff and local oversight committee tabulate and review the survey results. County needs and concerns are identified. Based on the results, a second survey may be designed and mailed out for the purpose of prioritizing the identified issues. Another option is for the oversight committee to prioritize the concerns that are identified on the first survey.

Description of the Process

1. The county office staff along with the oversight committee forms a design team. They establish a clear purpose for the survey. They design the survey questionnaire. They choose questions to solicit the information they seek. Questions may be worded reflecting the UW-Extension programming areas, or general questions may be used to gain a broad overview of issues and concerns facing the county.

2. Some counties use the arbitrary number of 100 citizens to participate in the mail survey. The number depends upon the size of the county, purpose of the survey and resources available. A random, systematic or purposeful sample may be employed. As with any data collection process, whom you ask determines what you hear. All effort should be made to select a representative cross-section of the county population. (See the UW-Extension publication on sampling for help with size and type of sample to use; available on the Internet at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluat.html)

3. Participants are called or sent a letter explaining the Extension planning process and soliciting their participation.

4. Mailing labels are prepared.

5. Surveys are mailed to participants allowing for a one-week return time. A return ad-

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Case Example provided by Arlen Albrecht, Taylor County.

dressed stamped envelope is included. A reminder post card is mailed after one week to enhance the response rate. Often, a second mailing of the original questionnaire is necessary in order to get an adequate return.

6. *Option 1*: The design team reviews the responses, creates groupings and designs a second questionnaire. This is mailed to the same group of respondents asking them now to prioritize the issues that were identified in the first questionnaire (a Delphi approach). Follow-up may be necessary to ensure an adequate return. Once these questionnaires are returned, the Extension office team tabulates the results for presentation and discussion with the oversight committee.

7. *Option 2*: The oversight committee reviews the results (after step 5) and prioritizes the identified concerns.

Involvement of Oversight Committee

Typically the Agriculture and Extension Education Committee members make up the oversight committee. These members are involved in the selection of citizens to be surveyed, help design the survey questionnaire and review the survey results. They may be involved in the prioritization of the identified concerns.

Plan for Addressing County Issues

After the final compilation is complete yielding a list of prioritized issues for the county, the design team reviews the list and makes recommendations regarding the Extension educational response.

Areas for Consideration

Advantages of using a mail survey:

- Savings of money and time (personal interviews consume considerable staff time)
- No personal or night meetings
- The questionnaire may be completed at the respondent's convenience
- Greater assurance of anonymity
- Standardized wording
- No interview bias
- Accessibility to wider county population

Disadvantages of using a mailed survey:

- Lack of flexibility
- Low response rate
- Written communication only
- No control over the environment
- Questions may remain unanswered or answered incompletely
- Additional or unexpected comments are not captured

County office staff involvement in the survey process is vital. The office team works with the oversight committee as a design team to identify the sample of participants. They design and test the questionnaire(s). Office staff makes confirmation phone calls to the survey respondents and manage the survey distribution and returns. The county Extension office team tabulates and analyses the responses. Finally, the design team meets to determine the issues Extension will address and assign responsibilities.

The entire process requires two to three months for design, response time, analysis and prioritizing.

Resources Needed

Postage, envelops, printed questionnaires and cover letters, postcards, faculty and staff time

Level of Oversight Committee Involvement

Help select survey participants, help design survey questions, review preliminary results, review final results and select priority issues the local UWEX office will work on.

NOTE: (1) Response rates in mail surveys depend upon the number of contacts that are made. The more contacts you make the higher the response rate. Repeated and well-timed contacts in a pleasant manner encourage response. (2) Mail surveys require advance planning, professional looking materials and adequate help. (3) Of utmost importance is the look and feel of the questionnaire. Make sure the questionnaire is attractive, easy to follow and understand. (Salant and Dillman, 1994. *How to Conduct Your Own Survey,* John Wiley and Sons)

Sample Advance Confirmation Phone Call

Hello. (Verify who is on the line.)

This is ________ (name). *I am the* _________ (position) *with* __________ (organization).

Within the next few days, you will receive a survey in the mail asking you to help identify the needs and assets of ________ County as well as to look to the future. The UW-Extension Office is in the process of identifying concerns facing people in our county and throughout the state in order to set programming direction and allocate resources.

It is a short questionnaire that will take only a few minutes to complete. Your input is important for ensuring that the University serves the needs of the county. Results will be widely shared. May we count on your participation?

Thank you in advance for your help.

Goodbye . . .

Sample Cover Letter

Date

____

____

____

Dear ________________;

As a resident of _______ County, you know about concerns and issues facing the people of our county. Knowing how people view their county—its current needs and strengths, and how they would like the county to be in the future—is vital to those who make decisions about the programs and services that are available.

You are one of a small number of people who are being asked to give their opinion about the current situation in _____ County and your vision of the future. Your name was [drawn randomly from a list of all registered voters; identified by _______]. In order that the results of this survey truly represent the thinking of the people of _____ County, it is important that you fully complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the envelope provided.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so that we may check your name off the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire. No individual responses will be reported. A summary of the results will be mailed to you when completed.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact us. Thank you very much for your help in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

County Office Department Head, Chairperson of Oversight Committee

Sample Follow-Up Post Card

Last week, a questionnaire was mailed to you seeking your opinions about the concerns facing people in our county and what you would like the county to be like in five years. Your name was selected_______________ [indicate process used to select sample].

If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire, thank you very much. If not, please do so today. We appreciate your help because we know how useful your ideas will be in setting direction for the county.

If you did not receive a questionnaire, or if it was misplaced, please call us at _________ (phone number) and we will get another one in the mail to you immediately.

Sincerely,

County Office Department Head, Chairperson of Oversight Committee

Sample Follow-Up Cover Letter in Second Mailing

Date

____
____
____

Dear ________________;

About three weeks ago, we sent you a questionnaire seeking your opinions about the issues facing _______ County. As of today, we have not received your completed questionnaire. We realize that you may not have had time to complete it. However, we would genuinely appreciate hearing from you.

This survey is being conducted so those residents like you can affect the type of programs and services available in _______ County. We are writing to you again because the usefulness of what we learn depends upon receiving input from each respondent. Your name was drawn ____________ (indicate process used to select sample). In order for the information from this survey to be representative of the county concerns, it is essential that each person in our sample returns the questionnaire.

In the event that your questionnaire has been misplaced, a replacement is enclosed. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have about this survey and the use of the results. Please contact us at ___________ (phone number or address).

Sincerely,

County Office Department Head, Chairperson of Oversight Committee

Key Informant Approach

Gathering together key informants or experts to provide input for a situation analysis is one method for identifying issues. Key informant data can be used alone or in conjunction with another approach. This approach requires the careful identification of a select group of formal and informal leaders, influential leaders or experts. It provides for structured contact with these informants, usually through direct interviews or a focus group format.

Description of the Process

1. Begin by identifying the key informants to be interviewed. These are individuals expected to have particular or "expert" knowledge about the county, its people, environment and issues. Use the Diversity Matrix in Appendix 1 as a basis for identifying key informants. It might be desirable to ensure that you have key informants representing each demographic characteristic and each value orientation as well as any other key groups in the county.

Who might the key informants be?

- Human Services administrators and/or staff
- Public Health staff
- School administrators
- CESA representatives
- 4-H leaders association
- Youth group leaders
- Clergy
- W2 administrators
- Agriculture students
- Equipment dealers
- USDA FmHA County Supervisor
- USDA CS District Conservationist
- Agricultural loan officers
- Veterinarians
- AMPI/Morning Glory Farms field manager
- Chamber of Commerce representatives
- Zoning administrator
- Bankers

Case example provided by Donna Doll-Yogerst, Oconto County.

- Law enforcement officers
- Head Start staff
- Hospital administrators
- Towns' association chairperson
- Village presidents
- Solid waste department managers

2. Determine how many key informants you will interview. This depends upon the size and diversity of the county and the number of areas/communities/stakeholder interests that are present. The time and energy available for conducting the interviews also determine it.

3. Decide when and how you will interact with the key informants. The core planning committee may decide to conduct a series of individual interviews with 10-15 selected key informants. It is often convenient to meet with key informants at their work or meeting place (as indicated in the example invitation letter). Or, you may choose to bring together several groups of key informants for focus group interviews.

4. Determine the questions that will structure the interviews. [See examples under Focus Group Interviews in Appendix 5C.]

Possible questions might include:

- What are the key needs and concerns facing youth in ______ County?
- What are the key needs and concerns of our families?
- What do you see as the number on priority issue affecting agriculture in _____ County during the next four year?
- What issues are facing our communities and towns? Our business? Our environment?
- What are some of our strengths in this county that we can use as we build our future?

5. Summarize the narrative responses. Record the results and list those who participated in the interviews in the report.

Involvement of Oversight Committee

The oversight committee helps identify the individuals to interview. Perhaps there are key informants or experts in their district or members of other committees they come in contact with who could provide useful information.

Areas of Consideration

This approach takes time, but gives staff the opportunity to ask probing follow-up questions to clarify the concerns and needs that are identified. It also gives county staff access to individuals who may be influential in the county and who can be involved in later program development and implementation. This approach has another pay-off for Extension: those who are interviewed perceive UW-Extension as recognizing their expertise and as being concerned about addressing important issues.

Sample Letter of Invitation

Date

____
____
____

Dear ________________;

Every four years, UW-Extension staff from across the State engages in a comprehensive program planning process. The results help guide our program efforts and direct University resources to meet the needs of Wisconsin citizens.

It is that time again when we seek input from people around the county in order to identify concerns and needs so that we can set our programming priorities. This time we have added a "Key Informant Approach" to the process. Key Informants are folks like you who come in contact with the issues and needs of _____ County residents on a daily basis. We want to access your expertise. Your ideas will be shared with the citizen committee as they identify the top priorities for ____ County.

We will be joining you at your _________ meeting on ___________________ at __________. We will be asking you to identify the major concerns and needs of the county, what you would like the county to look like in five years and what assets we have in _________ County that can help us with building a bright future.

We look forward to meeting with you on __________________.

Sincerely,

County Office Department Head, Chairperson of Oversight Committee

Existing Assessments—
Building on Existing Planning Activities

Over the past few years, many other state or county agencies and organizations have engaged in needs assessments and planning efforts. Data and assessment reports often exist. The results of these planning processes need to be reviewed to see what information currently exists that can help serve Extension's situational analysis needs.

This approach is fundamental to any situational analysis. Depending upon the information provided in existing assessments, other data collection is often needed.

Description of the Process

1. Begin by locating all the existing assessments conducted during the last two to three years. These could include, but are not limited to:

- Family preservation and support planning
- Community health needs assessments
- Child care resource and referral needs assessments
- Land use planning
- Economic development reports
- County government strategic plans
- Non-profits/CBO's needs assessments
- Teen Assessment Project (TAP) reports

2. Create a broad-based review committee using the Diversity Matrix found in Appendix 1 to work with the county Extension office staff. The role of the review committee is to review the information, validate its accuracy and reliability, and identify gaps and areas of overlap between the existing information and that, which is needed for the Extension planning process.

3. Where information from the existing assessments is inadequate or lacking, the review committee chooses an appropriate method for collecting the needed information.

4. Based on the information, needs, concerns and assets of the county are identified and listed.

Case Example provided Tedi Winnet, Kenosha County.

Involvement of Oversight Committee

The oversight committee provides general guidance to the whole process. Members of the committee may know of existing assessments to use and/or be able to help validate the accuracy and relevance of existing information. The oversight committee also helps identify individuals to serve on the review committee.

Areas for Consideration

Level of staff involvement:

- Staff identifies, collects and compiles all existing needs assessments.
- The county office team decides how to acquire information in an area where no existing assessment information is available.
- Staff works with a review committee.
- Meetings are held with the review committee and the Extension oversight committee.

Resource needed:

- Existing needs assessments

Time requirements:

- Varies, depending upon ability to locate existing needs assessments
- Time required meeting with review committee and Extension office oversight committee

DUAL SCAN APPROACH

In this approach, the county Extension office identifies needs and concerns related to the Extension program area. Each program area undertakes its own process to identify needs, concerns and assets relevant to its content area. In addition, the county office may engage in one of the other approaches in order to identify issues beyond the Extension program area focus.

Description of Process

Each program area within the county Extension office selects its own approach and tools (See Appendix 5.) appropriate for understanding the local situation relevant to the program area. For example, the Agricultural/Natural Resources staff might convene a meeting of farmers, agricultural lenders, cooperative representatives, agricultural businesspersons, farming organization representatives and others with an interest in agriculture/natural resources. Using the nominal group process, issues relevant to the agricultural/natural resource area are identified.

Family Living Education staff might choose to use a mail survey to identify family issues. The mailing list could include different family types (traditional, single parent, household with elderly parents, etc.), minority families, agencies that work with families, as well as other organizations that represent families. Responses to survey questions are compiled and tabulated. The highest priority issues are based upon the frequency of responses.

4-H Youth Development staff could convene a series of focus groups to identify issues facing youth. Participants might include youth, youth organization representatives, community leaders, 4-H leaders and representatives from agencies serving or with a focus on youth. From the focus groups, a consensus list of highest priority issues could be developed.

Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development staff could utilize recent community-wide needs assessments (face to face meetings and workshops, future directions surveys, etc.) to develop a list of high priority issues for the CNRED program area.

Each program area is responsible for the collection and summarization of reliable information.

Case Example provided by Dave Such, Sheboygan County.

To ensure a broad overview of issues facing the county beyond the Extension program area focus, countywide issue identification could be included. Any of the other approaches could be used. Before undertaking such a process, however, the county Extension office needs to determine if other countywide assessments exist or are being planned and if the results are compatible with the needs of the county Extension planning effort.

Areas of Consideration

The greatest advantage of this approach is the flexibility each program area has to determine which approach and techniques it will use to identify and prioritize issues. In all cases, a broader-based, countywide issues identification processes should be used, if relevant. A disadvantage is that two processes need to be conducted, assuming that another agency or organization has done no relevant countywide planning assessment.

APPENDIX 5
Tools

Nominal Group Technique

The nominal group technique (NGT) is a widely used small group process technique whose purpose is to produce a large number of ideas in a relatively short period of time.

It encourages contributions from everyone by allowing for equal participation among group members. A question is posed to the group. Individually and silently, each participant writes down his/her ideas. In round robin fashion, each member supplies an idea until all ideas are shared. Generally, six to 10 people participate. "Nominal" means that the participants form a group in name only. For most of the session, they do not interact as they would in other group processes.

The nominal group technique is used:

- To generate many, creative ideas
- To ensure everyone is heard
- When there is concern that some people may not be vocal
- To build consensus
- When there is controversy or conflict

Preparation and Supplies

1. Formulate discussion question. Ensure that wording prevents misunderstanding and is objective.

2. Supplies needed include:

- Flip chart for each table
- Masking tape
- 3x5 cards for each participant
- Work tables
- Felt pens

3. Group is divided into small work groups of five to nine members, each with a leader. A flip chart and markers are needed at each table and positioned so that all can see the ideas listed on the flip charts.

Procedure

1. *Introduction*: Briefly welcome participants, clarify the purpose of the group exercise and explain the procedure to be followed and how results are to be used.

2. *Present question*: Present verbally the question that is written on the flip chart—clarify as needed.

3. *Silent generation of ideas*: Each participant silently thinks of and writes down (on 3x5 card) as many ideas as possible. Allow five to 10 minutes.

4. *Record ideas*: In turn, each participant reads aloud one idea and it is recorded on the flip chart for all to see.

- Continue until all ideas are depleted.
- Discourage discussion, not even questions for clarification.
- Encourage "hitchhiking," i.e., expanding upon another's statement. Ideas do not have to be from the participant's written list.
- Participant may pass a turn and then add an idea at a subsequent turn
- Discourage combining ideas from individuals unless they are exactly the same.

5. G*roup discussion*: After all ideas are recorded, the person who suggested the idea is given the opportunity to explain it further.

- Duplicates may be combined.
- Wording may be changed if the originator agrees.
- Ideas are deleted only by unanimous agreement.
- Restrict discussion to clarify meaning; the value or merit of ideas is not discussed.

The nominal group technique often concludes with a prioritization process. However, generating ideas alone is valuable and is useful in a situational analysis process.

References

Delbecq, Andre H., Andrew H. Van de Ven and David Gustafson. 1975. *Group Techniques for Program Planning: A Guide to Nominal Group and Delphi Processes.* Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Delphi Technique

The island of Delphi was the hallowed site of the most revered oracle in ancient Greece. Legend has it that Apollo was the master of Delphi. Apollo was famous throughout Greece for his ability to foresee the future. Those who consulted the oracle brought gifts, thereby making Delphi one of the richest and most influential locales in Greece.

The Delphi technique was established in 1953 to gain the perspectives of military officers regarding the amount of bombs needed in case of war. Since then it has been used and adapted to address a variety of complex future-oriented questions. It is an iterative process that involves mailing repeated rounds of questionnaires to a selected group of respondents, considered to be experts in a given subject matter area. Responses to one round are summarized and developed into the next round questionnaire that seeks agreement, disagreement and insights. The mailed Delphi can be adapted for people meeting in a group or for electronic groups (see Witkin and Auschuld, 1995).

The Delphi technique is used to:

- Solicit expert opinion on a particular subject
- Provide group interaction without a face-to-face meeting
- Avoid direct confrontation of people with opposing views

Preparation

Careful selection of participants is important since the quality and accuracy of responses to a Delphi are only as good as the expert quality of the participants who are involved in the process. The number of participants depends upon the purpose of the Delphi and the diversity of the targeted population. Ten to 15 people may be adequate for a focused Delphi where participants do not vary a great deal. In other cases, several hundred participants may be appropriate. Most counties in 1995 identified from 20 to 50 individuals to receive the Delphi questionnaires. The questionnaires need to be carefully constructed and the rounds orchestrated with a clear purpose in mind.

Procedures

1. Form a team to undertake and monitor the Delphi.

2. Identify the participants. Customarily, participants are experts in the subject area. How-

ever, lay persons with a vested interest in the topic are also frequently included. For the purposes of countywide planning, representation from the various user and non-user groups across the county is important (refer to Diversity Matrix in Appendix 1)

3. Contact Delphi participants and solicit their participation. Clearly state the purpose of the Delphi, how results will be used and the procedures. Participant cooperation and continued involvement over the course of the Delphi is critical so this step is very important. Consider a written letter to each participant followed by a telephone call.

4. Develop the first-round Delphi questionnaire. Pre-test the questionnaire for proper wording (e.g., ambiguities, vagueness).

5. Send the first questionnaire to participants and collect returns. Code response forms to keep track of returns though individual responses remain confidential and results are reported anonymously.

6. Analyze the first-round responses.

7. Prepare the second-round questionnaire (and possible testing).

8. Transmit the second-round questionnaires to the participants. Collect returns.

9. Analyze second-round responses. Number of rounds may range from two to four.

10. Prepare report and share with participants.

A packet of materials to help in administering a Delphi process was developed for the 1995 planning process. It is available from the Program Development and Evaluation Unit, 432 N. Lake St., Madison, WI 53706; 608-262-9940. Sample contact examples follow.

References

Delbecq, Andre H., Andrew H. Van de Ven and David Gustafson. 1975. *Group Techniques for Prgram Planning: A Guide to Nominal Group and Delphi Processes*. Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Johnson, Donald, Larry Meiller, Lorna Miller, and Gene Summers. 1987. *Needs Assessment: Theory and Methods. Ames*, Iowa: Iowa State University Press.

Witkin, Belle Ruth and James W. Altschuld. 1995. *Planning and Conducting Needs Assessment: A Practical Guide*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Sample Personal Contact to Recruit Delphi Participant

Hello. This is _______________ from ____________.

The __________ County Cooperative Extension Office is beginning a long-range planning effort to ensure our effectiveness in meeting changing needs in the county. This is part of a statewide process to guide the University of Wisconsin-Extension's direction and allocation of resources.

As part of this effort, we are asking people like you who know the county to help identify the needs, concerns and assets of ____ County. You have been nominated to represent the county's interests in this process. Your input will help charter the future of our county. Your participation will involve responding to two different questionnaires. This will take no more than one hour of your time in total. You can either receive the questionnaire by mail or we can arrange a telephone interview or a time to meet. We expect to be finished with the whole process by _________ when you will receive a report of the results.

Would you be willing to participate?

(If yes, find out whether the person wishes to receive the questionnaire by mail, telephone or in person.)

Do you have any questions?

We'll be sending a letter with further explanation in a few days.

Thank you.

Sample Letter of Introduction for Delphi

Date

____
____
____

Dear ______________;

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the _________ County Extension Service planning process.

You are one of _______ individuals in the county being asked to help identify the concerns, needs and assets of _________ County. You will receive two separate mailings that focus on three central questions:

- What are current needs and concerns in the county?
- What assets do we have?
- What would you like the county to be like in the future?

Responses from the first questionnaire will be summarized to form the basis of the second questionnaire.

We expect that your involvement in this process will take no more than one hour of your time. We hope to have all the results compiled by ________ when you can expect to receive the results. Your volunteer commitment adds greatly to the identification of issues facing people in our county and throughout the state.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at ___________. We thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,

County Office Department Head, Chairperson of Oversight Committee

Sample Letter to Accompany First Questionnaire

Date

____
____
____

Dear ______________;

Enclosed please find the first questionnaire for our Extension program planning effort. You are one of a small number of people providing their input so your response is vital. If you have any questions, please contact me at __________.

[Optional wording if you include Trends Analysis information: We've enclosed come background materials that may be helpful reading.]

We would like the enclosed questionnaire returned to use by ____________. A self-addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Sincerely,

County Office Department Head, Chairperson of Oversight Committee

Sample Letter to Accompany Second Questionnaire

Date

____
____
____

Dear _____________;

Thank you for your response to the first questionnaire and for your commitment to the Extension planning process. Your continued participation is critical. As we indicated in the beginning, this process involves a series of two questionnaires. Enclosed is the second questionnaire based on what you and the other respondents provided on the first questionnaire. We now need you to rank order the items to clarify their importance for county residents.

Please return your questionnaire in the self-addressed stamped envelope by ________.
We expect to analyze the information and feedback the results to you by _________.

Sincerely,

County Office Department Head, Chairperson of Oversight Committee

Focus Group Interviews

Focus groups are structured small group interviews. They are "focused" in two ways. First, the persons being interviewed are similar in some way (e.g., limited resource family members as a group, family service providers as a group, local officials as a group). Second, the purpose of the interview is to gather information about a particular topic guided by a set of focused questions. Participants hear and interact with each other and the leader, which yields different information than if people were interviewed individually.

The purpose of focus groups is to develop a broad and deep understanding rather than a quantitative summary. Focus groups are a highly effective method for "listening" to clientele and non-users of Extension programs. The emphasis is on insights, responses and opinions. Usually, there are eight to 12 participants. Multiple groups are recommended since each discussion is highly influenced by who is involved and the comments that surface. Focus groups typically run one to two hours.

Focus groups are used:

- To solicit perceptions, views and a range of opinions, not consensus
- When you wish to probe an issue or theme in depth
- When you require skilled leadership and more than one group for reliable results

Preparation

- A skillful facilitator (leader) is important. You may want to use an agent from another county.
- Craft the set of questions and their order to flow as a natural conversation might.
- Limit the number of questions (six or less); sequence the questions from very broad or general to narrow or specific.
- Consider tape recording the interview. For formal studies, tapes are transcribed.
- For informal studies, tapes serve as an audit trail, but only the most pertinent quota tions are captured verbatim.
- Prepare an assistant moderator to take notes. The assistant moderator describes the sense of what each person says, provides an identifier of who said what (e.g., single mother comment) and identifies how the things were said (e.g., specific phrases, non- verbal cues, etc.).

Procedure

The interview itself has three parts: the opening, the interview questions and the wrap-up.

The opening:

- Welcome, make introductions and thank participants.
- Review the purpose of the focus group interview.
- Review the ground rules: everyone's ideas are important and everyone has an opportunity to speak. There are no right or wrong answers; even negative com ments are useful in gaining insight about the topic under discussion. All comments are confidential and only summarized information will be communicated.

The interview:

Guide participants into the questioning, beginning with a general question first. As participants begin to share ideas, cycle through the group, ensuring that each participant has a chance to be heard. When comments related to one question are finished, summarize them, making sure there is agreement with the summary. Capitalize on unanticipated comments and useful directions the discussion may take. Probe and move flexibly into unplanned aspects of the topic but be careful about unnecessary or irrelevant divergences.

The wrap-up:

You may wish to include a "cooling down" exercise. For example, ask group members to say "one thing that you heard here that was really important." Thank participants and remind them how the information will be used. Participants often like to receive a follow-up (perhaps abbreviated) summary of the discussion.

Focus Group Summary

Various techniques are possible for analyzing the data. For most purposes, an abbreviated process is sufficient. At the end of the focus group, the facilitator and assistant moderator debrief, review notes and write down the themes and main points that emerged and were discussed under each question and in general. Within the next few days, the facilitator and assistant moderator review their own notes independently and then reconcile any differences in their interpretations.

Sample Focus Group Process for 1999 County Planning Process

Five to 10 people per group; similar types of people but not close friends; neutral setting; circle seating

(1) The Opening - Welcome:

Hello and welcome to our session. Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion of county needs and concerns. My name is ________ and I represent the University of Wisconsin-Extension. Assisting me is _______ from _______. We are attempting to gain information about the needs, concerns and assets in our county. This will be used to help set direction and allocate resources for our Extension educational programming.

You were selected because __________ [Indicate why the individuals were invited, e.g., you are considered to be leaders and influential leaders across the county. You are representative of others in the county…]

For the next hour, we will be discussing the current situation in ______ County and our vision for the future. This includes the needs we have as well as the assets and strengths that we have here in _____ County. There are no right or wrong answers but rather differing ideas and points of view. Please feel free to share your comments even if they differ from what others have said.

Before we begin, let me remind you of some ground rules. Please speak up—only one person should talk at a time. [Optional if a tape recorder is used: *We are recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments.*] *We will be on a first name basis tonight, and in our later reports there will not be any names attached to comments. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Keep in mind that we are just as interested in hearing what are the good things about the county as well as what we need to improve or what the problems may be.*

We should wrap up in about one hour. Before we begin, let's make sure we each know each other…

(2) The interview—Questions:

Select five to six questions that clearly get to the information you are seeking. The design team may write its own questions or use the questions in Sections 6.2 and 8.1 as a guide.

Sample introductory questions:

If you had to describe _______ County in just a few words, what would those words be?

Our lives and communities are complex and changing. I'd like you to think about your own situation and that of your friends and neighbors. Listed on the board are broad categories that affect almost everyone. Also, here is a sheet of paper with these topics listed. Take a few moments and write down a concern or need in each category that is most important to you:

Family Community Work Environment Government
Education Public services Youth

Now, let's talk about these categories, one at a time.

What particular assets or strengths do we have here in our county? Again, let's use some categories as seen on the board:

Individual Family Group Community assets
Economic assets Environmental assets

Probing questions

- *Would you explain further?*
- *Would you give me an example of what you mean?*
- *Please say a little more about that.*
- *Is there anything else?*

(3) Wrap-up:

Final question

As we wrap-up, would each of you indicate which concern facing ______ County you think is really important?

Thank you so much for this stimulating discussion and your input. We will be summarizing all that we heard and preparing a report. Please leave me your names if you would like to see that report. We will be sharing this information with ______.

References

Krueger, Richard. 1994. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Krueger, Richard, 1997. *The Focus Group Kit.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stewart, David. 1990. *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Affinity Diagram

The affinity diagram is a tool for helping to organize ideas, a complex issue or situation. It involves a group meeting of usually five to 10 people and lasts about one hour.

In a situational analysis, an affinity diagram may be used to generate ideas about the needs, assets or concerns of the locale.

The affinity diagram is used to:

- To bring structure to a large or complicated issue
- To break down a complicated issues into easy-to-understand categories
- To ensure that all participants have an equal voice
- To build consensus

Preparation and Supplies

1. Select and invite participants. Plan affinity session.

2. Supplies needed include:

- Large post-it notes or index cards
- Marking pens (regular pens are hard to see at a distance)
- Masking tape if you will post the index cards on the walls

Procedure

1. Make introductions, review purpose and procedure for the meeting. Clearly state the question participants are to generate ideas about—have it written on a flip chart for all to see.

2. Generate Ideas.

- Each participant writes ideas on post-it notes or index cards.
- Encourage people to write clear, concise ideas in one to three words.
- One idea is written per card/note.
- Allow about 15 minutes.

3. Collect notes/cards.

- Collect the post-it notes or index cards.
- Mix them up and spread them out on a flat surface.

4. Arrange cards into groupings.

- Participants pick out sticky notes/cards and place them into groupings. This can be done using the walls where sticky notes are clustered for all to see. Or, with a smaller group, index cards can be arranged on a large table.
- Restrict talking during this process so that participants aren't influenced by each other and arguments don't arise.
- Don't force cards/notes into groupings. It is okay to have "loners."
- Encourage participants to move sticky notes around until the best groupings emerge.
- Participants may move cards/notes that someone else has already placed; or if an idea seems to fit in two places, make a second card.

5. Label each grouping.

- Participants develop a title or heading of a few concise wordsfor each card grouping.
- Sometimes there is a card that captures the meaning of the group. Place that at the top of the group. If there is no such card, write one.
- Place groupings that are similar next to each other, or in order.
- Combine groupings that seem very similar, or divide groupings where the clustered cards/notes seem too dissimilar.
- Continue this process until participants agree on the groupings and labels.

References

Chang, Richard Y. and Matthew E. Niedzwiecki. 1993. *Continuous Improvement Tools: Volume 1: A Practical Guide to Achieve Quality Results*. Irvine, CA: Richard Chang Associates, Inc.

Tague, Nancy R. 1995. *The Quality Toolbox.* Milwaukee, WI: ASQ Quality Press.

Survey

Surveys are a structured way to involve people and collect information-using questionnaires. Typically surveys are conducted through the mail (surface or electronic) or by phone.

A survey is used:

- To collect standardized information from large numbers of people
- When face-to-face meetings are inadvisable
- When privacy is important or independent opinions and responses are needed

Preparation and supplies

- Be clear about the purpose of the survey and the information you want to collect.
- Carefully craft the questions and format the questionnaire so it is concise and attractive.
- Pilot test the questionnaire with individuals similar to the survey respondents.
- Prepare the cover letter to include purpose and use of the survey, identification with
- UWEX-County office, and asking respondents for their valuable assistance–how important their response is to the success of the survey. Assure confidentiality.

Supplies needed include:

- Questionnaires, letters, postcards, envelopes, postage-paid stamped return envelopes

Response rate often is low in mail surveys unless care is taken in preparation and there is persistent follow-up. Since those who reply may not be typical of the population, care is needed in interpretation of the results.

There are six main elements to think about when planning a survey: target population, sampling, distribution, questionnaire design, data analysis and management. The following guidelines are based on Dillman's Total Design Method (Reference: Sallant, Priscilla and Don Dillman. 1994. *How to Conduct Your Own Survey*. N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons).

Procedure

Mail Survey

1. Form team for designing and implementing the survey.
2. Compile list of respondents.
3. Draw sample (if used).
4. Produce mailing labels, numbered sequentially. Determine how many follow-ups you will do and prepare that many sets of mailing labels: first mailing, reminder card, follow-ups and master list.
5. Develop questionnaire.
6. Pilot test questionnaire and modify.
7. Develop cover letters and postcard (typically there is the initial cover letter, a reminder postcard and follow-up cover letter(s).
8. Print questionnaires, letters and postcards. Prepare envelopes.
9. Number questionnaires sequentially.
10. Stuff and send first mailing (match number on questionnaire with number on master mailing list). Include postage-paid return envelope.
11. After one week, mail reminder postcard.
12. Remove names of respondents from subsequent sets of mailing labels.
13. After three weeks, stuff and send second cover letter and questionnaire to those who haven't responded.
14. After five weeks, stuff and send third cover letter and questionnaire (as appropriate).
15. Summarize response rate.
16. Code and tabulate questionnaires.
17. Analyze and interpret data.
18. Report findings.

Telephone Survey

1. Form team for designing and implementing the survey.
2. Compile list of respondents.
3. Draw sample (if used).
4. Develop questionnaire.
5. Pilot test questionnaire and modify.
6. Develop introduction.
   - Identify yourself by full name and organization, UW-Extension.
   - Establish that correct respondent is on the phone.
   - State the purpose of the call and assure confidentiality.
7. Duplicate questionnaires.
8. Write telephone numbers on questionnaires.
9. Train interviewers, as appropriate.
10. Collect data.
11. The best times to call are between 4 and 9 p.m. weekdays, 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Saturdays (no Sundays).
12. Summarize response rate.
13. Code and tabulate questionnaires.
14. Analyze and interpret data.
15. Report findings.

References

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Herman, Joan, Lynn Lyons Morris and Carol Taylor Fitz-Gibbon. 1987. *Evaluator's Handbook.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

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Sallant, Priscilla and Don Dillman. 1994. *How to Conduct Your Own Survey*. N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons.

Sawer, Barbara, 1984. *Evaluating for Accountability: A Practical Guide for the Inexperienced Evaluator*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Extension Service.

APPENDIX 6

Sample News Releases

Contact: Bob Agent
Fox County Extension
Phone 123 456 7890
Fax 123 456 7890

12345 Main Street
Your Town, WI 55555
Phone 123 456 7890
Fax 123 456 7890

UW Extension

News Release

UW-EXTENSION UNDERTAKES 4-YEAR PROGRAM PLANNING

Your Town, WI, September 23, 1999: Fox County is part of a massive statewide planning effort University of Wisconsin-Extension undertakes every four years. The goal is to make sure that county and state resources are used to meet the changing needs and concerns of citizens. Every county office across the state is involved, as well as the campus-based person.

“This is an opportunity for the University of Wisconsin to listen to the people of the state and to engage with them in a process of identifying community needs and assets and setting direction for the Extension program,” says Audrey Poppel, Fox County Department Head. “Each county undertakes the process in its own way, but in the end, we will have locally-based information to help ensure that our programming efforts are meeting real issues and concerns right here in Fox County.”

An advisory board named by the Fox County Extension Education Committee is designing and managing the process. The group will collaborate with other organizations and agencies in the county. For more information, contact Bob Agent at 456-7890.

Sample Advance Notice News Release

Contact: Bob Agent
Fox County Extension
Phone 123 456 7890
Fax 123 456 7890

12345 Main Street
Your Town, WI 55555
Phone 123 456 7890
Fax 123 456 7890

UW Extension

News Release

FOX COUNTY RESIDENTS ENGAGED IN COUNTY SURVEY

Your Town, WI, September 23, 1999: Fox County residents have a chance to voice their opinions about county needs, concerns and strengths. A mail survey is being distributed Monday to about 200 households by the Fox County Extension office. Households were randomly selected to participate to represent public opinion across the county.

Residents selected for the survey are urged to complete the brief survey within one week and return it in the accompanying stamped envelope. This survey will give direction to the county Extension office and other service agencies and organizations who provide education and services in Fox County. This is an opportunity for local citizens to provide input to identify issues to be addressed through local and state resources. All responses to the survey are confidential.

The results will only be representative if there is a high rate of return. “Only a high return will give an accurate view of our concerns,” says County Board Chairperson, Jane Chair. A steering committee of local residents helped design the survey.

For more information on the survey and the Extension statewide planning effort, contact Bob Agent at 456-7890.

Sample Follow-Up News Release

Contact: Bob Agent
Fox County Extension
Phone 123 456 7890
Fax 123 456 7890

12345 Main Street
Your Town, WI 55555
Phone 123 456 7890
Fax 123 456 7890

UW Extension

News Release

DEVELOPMENT TOP FOX COUNTY CONCERN

Your Town, WI, September 23, 1999: Residents of Fox County are most concerned about land use and development as revealed through a series of focus groups held across the county. More than fifty citizens and community leaders met in five different locations to discuss the concerns, needs and assets of Fox County during September and October.

"We identified a lot of concerns and problems that we have here in the county," reported one participant. "We also looked at our strengths—the good things that are going on and who can do what to help solve some of our problems." John Smooth, Community Development agent, UW-Extension, facilitated the group discussions as part of a countywide planning process. The results will help set priorities for the programs and activities delivered by the UW-County Extension Office and other agencies in the county.

The five groups identified more than 20 concerns, strengths and needs affecting Fox County. Several concerns concerns focused __________________. Some of the county strengths identified by these county citizens include ___________.

"This was an important process," reported another participant. "Now, that we better understand what we have and the issues we all are dealing with, we can plan better what we need to do."

For a complete summary of the county discussions or to see the list of concerns, needs and assets identified by the focus groups, please contact Bob Agent at 456-7890.

Sample Follow-Up News Release

Contact: Bob Agent
Fox County Extension
Phone 123 456 7890
Fax 123 456 7890

12345 Main Street
Your Town, WI 55555
Phone 123 456 7890
Fax 123 456 7890

News Release

COUNTY SURVEY ACHIEVES RECORD SETTING 90% RETURN

Your Town, WI, September 23, 1999: The Fox County Assessment of Concerns and Strengths conducted by Fox County UW-Extension Office in conjunction with the County Board of Supervisors has set a new record. Of the 200 households randomly sampled to participate in this survey, 90 percent returned their surveys.

"We can feel confident that these results represent the opinions and feelings of our county population," exclaimed Pete Person, Chairperson of the Extension Education Committee of the County Board of Supervisors. "This is a very real statement about the commitment of our county citizens to be involved in the future of Fox County."

The results are being analyzed and will be shared at the next meeting of the Extension Committee on _______ at ____________. This countywide assessment was designed to provide direction for the programs and activities to be delivered by the UW-County Extension Office and other agencies in the county during the next four years.

Cooperative Extension
University of Wisconsin-Extension

University of Wisconsin, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating.

This guide is available in PDF format on the Internet on the Program Development and Evaluation web page at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/statewide/guide.html