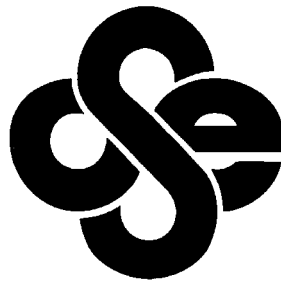


Planning for Performance: Developing Programs that Produce Results

by

*Roger A. Rennekamp, Ph.D.
Extension Specialist in Program and Staff Development*



Cooperative Extension Service

University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture
Kentucky State University

August 1999

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Performance Measurement in the New Millenium	3
Results-Based Accountability	3
Performance Measurement	3
Planning for Performance	4
Chapter 2: A Foundation for Planning	5
Why Bother?	5
A Future Perspective	5
Functions of Planning	6
The Professional's Role in Planning	6
Chapter 3: Building a Program Development Model	7
What is a Program?	7
Program Development Models	7
Extension Program Development	8
A Model for Program Development	8
Chapter 4: Program Determination	10
Context for Planning	10
Development of Linkages with the Public	10
Inventory of Needs and Assets	12
Identification of Program Opportunities	15
Priority Setting	17
Determining Major Areas of Programming	19
Identifying and Engaging Collaborators	20
County Situational Statement	20
Chapter 5: Developing the Plan of Work	21
Desired SEEC, Practice, and KOSA	21
Selecting Impact Indicators	23
Planning Educational Experiences	24
Mobilize Resources	25

Chapter 6: Evaluation and Accountability 26

- Types of Evaluation 27
- Process Evaluation 27
- Outcome Evaluation 27
- Reporting Accomplishments 30
- Accountability 30
- Summary 31

List of References 32

Chapter 1:

Performance Measurement in the New Millennium

The accountability landscape is changing. Decision-makers want more from public institutions than a summary of activities and sweeping generalizations about the good their programs do. They want data which clearly communicates the results of their programs.

Results-Based Accountability

Much of this changing accountability landscape can be attributed to the proliferation of what are called **results-based accountability** initiatives. Although institutions have historically been held **accountable** for such things as spending appropriated dollars for the purposes intended and for being as efficient as possible in producing their outputs, they were rarely held accountable for producing results. As Horsch (1996) puts it "This audit mentality may have ensured that the books were in order, but it provided little information about whether programs had their intended impact."

Result-based accountability holds institutions accountable for results. It calls for them to articulate the desired results of the program in advance, describe how funds will be expended to produce the results, and measure the degree to which the intended results were achieved.

Many times, the number of dollars an institution receives in the future is contingent upon that institution's ability to document the results it achieved with previous appropriations. Often referred to as **performance-based budgeting**, this process of rewarding success is characteristic of several governmental reform initiatives which include the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and a number of state school reform efforts.

Performance Measurement

Results-based accountability and performance-based budgeting initiatives have driven many public institutions and non-profit organizations to develop program planning models which focus on articulating both the intended results of their programs and on developing plans for measuring those results. **Performance measurement** is a term which used to describe the efforts of these institutions and organizations to collect and report data which documents that the **intended results** were achieved (GAO, 1998).

We use the term **results** to broadly describe the state of affairs which exists after a program is completed. Many times we are relatively safe in assuming that the program alone produced the results. Other times, the results may not have been produced solely by the program. The Government Accounting Office (GAO, 1998) describes two types of program evaluation which can be conducted for the purpose of measuring program performance.

Outcome evaluation can be defined as a form program evaluation which assesses the extent to which a program's intended results (or objectives) are achieved (GAO, 1998). It does not attempt to identify the extent to which the program was responsible for producing the results. (Hatry, 1997). When we conduct this type of evaluation we refer to results as **outcomes**. Most results-based accountability initiatives employ outcome evaluation techniques to measure organizational performance.

Impact evaluation is a form of program evaluation that is implemented when external factors other than the program may have played a role in producing the results (GAO, 1998). Such evaluation goes beyond outcome evaluation and utilizes methodologies which help to isolate the program's unique contribution to producing the results. The portion of the results produced by the program is defined as **impact**.

Planning for Performance

While many planning models focus on the articulation of intended outcomes, few devote enough attention to formulating plans for measuring whether or not those outcomes were achieved. By failing to plan for evaluation, program staff miss key opportunities for collecting evaluation data and scramble at the last minute to collect any type of evidence which attests to the program's success.

Perhaps the most important part of *Planning for Performance* is planning for performance *measurement*. Consequently, the central purpose of this publication is to help county-based Extension professionals incorporate a performance measurement focus into their long-range program plans. By planning to measure the performance of their programs, they are better prepared to meet current and future accountability challenges.

Chapter 2: A Foundation for Planning

Why Bother?

Think back to your childhood. Can you remember your favorite comic book hero? Was it Superman? Wonder Woman? Batman? Or was it Spiderman? Whichever you identified as your favorite, you probably remember at least one scene where the hero is found in their headquarters awaiting the next crisis to arise. The phone rings and the hero springs into action, spreading truth and fighting evil throughout the land.

Many of us within the Cooperative Extension Service have mused about the similarities between the fictional roles played by these comic book heroes and the roles that county Extension agents are often asked to play in their communities. We have even coined the term *superagent* to describe an outstanding performer in our organization.

Few would argue with the track record of these comic book heroes. (After all, many of them repeatedly saved the entire planet from almost certain destruction.) Similarly, many county Extension agents can recall instances where they have been successful in responding to major crises, albeit on a less than planetary scale.

There are certainly times when we must respond to crises and emergencies. But unlike the comic book heroes, we mortals cannot afford to continually operate in a reactive mode. No, Superman did not prepare a plan of work. But few in our organization are capable of stopping a speeding locomotive singlehandedly. We are more effective when we anticipate problems which may arise and develop plans to address them before a crisis situation develops.

A Future Perspective

The concept of program planning does contain an inherent enigma. "How is it possible to plan a program when the environment or context in which programs are conducted is constantly changing?" One may ask, "How can I know what the future will bring?" Clearly, the future is filled with a great deal of uncertainty. At times, information is so limited that we have difficulty even imagining the future.

But being a catalyst for change often requires us to act before the situation is entirely clear. We cannot afford to allow the situation to completely unfold. In short, we must act (or plan to act) in the face of ambiguity. As more information becomes available a plan can be changed or modified as needed. But it was the initial plan that set our efforts in motion.

Functions of Planning

The process of program planning serves several useful functions in today's Extension organization. A few of these functions are identified below.

- **Direction** - Program planning helps to identify what is important to the people of a particular county. It helps the Cooperative Extension Service set program priorities.
- **Intent** - A plan of work helps communicate to the public what the organization intends to focus on over a specified period of time.
- **Commitment** - The best way to ensure follow through on intentions is to put those intentions in writing. A plan of work makes a commitment to act in accordance with intentions.

- **Evaluation** - The planning process encourages us to define what success will look like and how it will be measured.
- **Accountability** - A comprehensive plan of work lets decision-makers know how the organization plans to allocate valuable resources and the results it intends to be accountable for producing.

The Professional's Role in Planning

A professional career is one that has an identifiable base of knowledge and research that can be drawn upon in making decisions regarding possible courses of action. Program planning is perhaps the one activity that provides Extension professionals with the greatest opportunity to exercise that professional prerogative.

Although program advisory groups provide significant input into determining program priorities, Extension professionals play several important roles in the planning process. They serve as the overall coordinators and facilitators of the local planning process. Because of their knowledge of available curricula and the educational process they are important resources in program design. They are also involved in program evaluation. Finally, it is the professional staff member also has the responsibility of putting programmatic intentions down on paper in the form of a plan of work.

Chapter 3: Building a Program Development Model

What is a program?

The word **program** has many different meanings. We program the VCR. Children participate in after-school programs. Our tax dollars fund various government programs. When we go to a sporting event we either purchase or are provided with a program. With so many definitions, it is easy to become quite liberal in what we consider an **Extension** program.

For the purposes of this publication, a **program** is defined as a sequence of educational experiences purposefully selected to address a locally identified need or issue. **Program development** is the deliberate process through which representatives of the public are involved in designing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs that address needs they identify.

Program Development Models

A student of program development need not look far to find a plethora of different models and schemes for developing non-formal educational programs. Sork and Buskey (1986) conducted a descriptive and evaluative analysis of 93 different program development models. Among their findings were two particularly interesting observations. One observation was that across all of the 93 models there appeared to be little cumulative development within the literature or building upon the prior work of others. Another observation was that the planning models described varied more in contextual application than in substantive differences in planning philosophy. For example, some models were developed for use in continuing education settings, where program participants may be seeking certification to practice in a certain field, while others are more appropriate for community development applications.

Patrick Boyle (1985) in his review of program development models observed one striking similarity. He noted that most models were similar in that they divided the program development process into three phases - (1) program planning, (2) design and implementation, and (3) evaluation and accountability.

The **planning** phase (which the author contends can more accurately be described as the program determination phase) usually includes some mechanism for linking the educational institution to the clients it intends to serve, an assessment of needs, and a process for assigning priority to the needs. This phase focuses on determining what needs to be done.

The **design and implementation** phase begins *after* a commitment is made to embark upon a particular programming thrust. Design and implementation usually involves the identification of desired outcomes, selecting appropriate learning experiences and activities, mobilizing and deploying resources, and conducting the experiences and activities that are planned.

Although the **evaluation and accountability** phase is often depicted as the third and final phase of program development, elements of program evaluation and accountability are intertwined throughout all other phases of the program development process. (For example, identifying indicators to be used for judging the success of a program should ideally be done in the design and implementation phase.)

Extension Program Development

For a number of years, program development models developed by either Boyle (1981) or Boone (1971) formed the basis for many states' program development models. Forest, McKenna, and Donovan (1986) added a more comprehensive approach to planning multiple program thrusts that might be simultaneously undertaken at any level of Cooperative Extension. Bennett and Rockwell (1995) incorporated program evaluation into a two-phase model characterized by **program development** and **program performance** phases.

The model introduced in this publication builds upon the notions advanced by these four models in two key ways. First, it incorporates a team-oriented, collaborative approach into the process of program development. Secondly, this model is designed to better position Extension professionals to meet the challenges placed upon them by the wave of performance measurement initiatives that are rapidly sweeping the country.

A Model for Program Development

The model depicted on page 9 summarizes the program development process used by the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. As a reader moves from left to right across the illustration, the three phases characteristic of most program development models become evident.

The column of boxes near the left margin comprise the program determination phase, where activities

are geared around deciding what Extension should be focusing on in a particular county. Activities characteristic of the design and implementation phase are found in the center of the illustration. At the heart of the design and implementation phase is the plan of work.

While many evaluation and accountability activities occur after the program has been conducted, some important steps actually occur in the program determination and the design and implementation phases. In this model, evaluation and accountability activities are integrated throughout all of the model rather than depicted as a separate phase of the model. For example, baseline information gathered during the inventory of needs and assets can be compared with data generated through subsequent program evaluation efforts. And plans for collecting evaluation data are made during the design and implementation phase.

The subsequent chapters guide you through the steps of the model.

Chapter 4: Program Determination

Context for Planning

A contextual approach to planning recognizes that nothing occurs in isolation. So before we embark upon a program development process we need to know as much as possible about the environment or **context** in which we are operating.

There are a number of elements of context. These include such things as geography, politics, culture, values, history, religion, resources, staffing, and organizational mission. All these play a role in determining the "working environment" in which program development occurs.

Many of these elements of context exist external to the Extension organization. For example, geography of the region may determine where people congregate. Culture, religion, and values may play a role in determining what people in a community believe about an issue. History may determine what people of a community expect from various institutions.

Several "in-house" factors also affect context. Organizational mission statements serve define the scope of an organization's activity. And each staff member brings with them his or her own set of experiences and background.

While context should not be the sole factor in making decisions regarding whether to embark on a particular area of programming, failure to consider context can be disastrous.

Development of Linkages with the Public

A guiding principle of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service is the belief that people are more likely to participate in and support programs that are relevant to needs and issues they help identify. Consequently, we believe that building linkages with the people of a county is an important step in the program development process. But getting input from every resident of a county, however, is virtually impossible. Fortunately, there are a number of other ways to go about getting input without asking everyone. Most of these involve the use of **representatives** of the public or the institutions and organizations which serve them.

Linkages with the public can be viewed as either **formal** or **informal** in nature. Formal linkage mechanisms include such things as community coalitions, advisory councils, and committees. Informal mechanisms include both strategic and unplanned interactions with members of the community that are less structured in nature.

Formal Linkages

There are a number of formal mechanisms through which the Cooperative Extension Service is linked to the citizens of a local community. Extension agents are often asked to serve as members of various community coalitions and inter-agency committees. They are often ex-officio members of fair boards. These linkages create important vehicles by which valuable information about the county can be channeled into Extension's program development process.

But Extension's own advisory council system, is perhaps the most important formal mechanism by which it builds linkages with local citizens.

Advisory Councils - Teitel (1994) defined advisory committees (councils), as "a group of volunteers that meets regularly on a long-term basis to provide advice and/or support to an institution or one of its sub-units." Or, as Thompson (1984) put it, advisory councils are a "bridge to the external public."

While Extension has used the advisory council concept for many years, other organizations and businesses are now re-discovering advisory groups as vehicles for getting customer input into product design and in the process of developing strategic plans.

County Extension Councils - Each county in Kentucky is expected to have a functioning County Extension Council. Although County Extension Councils perform a variety of functions ranging from communicating budget needs to appropriating bodies to providing input into staffing decisions, the bulk of their work focuses on programming. Ideally, this involvement should extend beyond setting priorities to active involvement in program implementation and evaluation. However, in this chapter we will primarily be discussing how these councils can become involved in conducting an inventory of needs and assets, identifying program opportunities, and setting program priorities.

County Extension Councils are composed of between 15 and 40 citizens of the county who can adequately represent the needs and interests of all citizens. To achieve this, composition of the County Extension Council should mirror the population of the county. Members should have a central interest in serving the needs of the community and be willing to share their perceptions, values, and beliefs for the common good of all.

If the membership of the County Extension Council does not meet the above criteria, members should be added. Appointment to the County Extension Council is made through a membership committee in consultation with Extension staff. A specific length of term will ensure rotation of membership. Each council should develop its own constitution and by-laws that specify such things as length of terms and the functions of the organization.

Relationships between County, Area, State, and National Programs - A cornerstone of Extension program development philosophy is the belief that program determination and design is done at the level where the program will be carried out. Extension programming is truly "grass roots" versus "top down" in nature. But many issues transcend county boundaries. Consequently, planning groups in several counties may simultaneously choose to work on the same issue or concern. When a number of counties simultaneously embark upon similar program thrusts, some observers might be led to believe that some central authority is dictating the direction that programming should take.

Conversely, however, exactly the opposite is occurring. Representatives from County Extension Councils across the state serve as members of Area and State Extension Councils. These councils provide a forum for discussing program needs of a broader in geographic area. When programming needs identified at various locations are similar, resources from higher levels in the organization can be realigned to support area and state program thrusts. Support materials are then developed to assist counties in their efforts to address those needs.

The same "bottom up" flow of information is found in reporting outcomes and accomplishments of Extension programs. Accomplishments resulting from county programs are aggregated into area accomplishments, area accomplishments into state accomplishments, and so on. Aggregated data is then used to demonstrate the impact Extension has had state or national issues.

Working with County Extension Councils - Each County Extension Council is a dynamic, changing, social entity. With each new member, the dynamics of the group changes. As groups increase in size, they also increase in complexity. The role that the Extension agent plays within a County Extension Council is that of a facilitator. Facilitators help groups achieve goals. The agent's job is to help the group maintain a balance between risk and stagnation, between too much agreement and too much conflict, and between individual needs and the common good. Skills in interpersonal communication and group process are essential for an Extension educator. Techniques can be learned, but experience and judgement are necessary to apply them.

Some key tasks in this facilitator role include helping the council collect information and statistics about the county that can be used in the inventory of needs and assets, generating ideas from potential programs, and guiding the group through a process of setting program priorities.

Informal Linkages

In addition to the linkages built through formal means, the development of informal linkages is also an important part of the program development process.

By living or working in the county they serve, Extension agents develop a unique "feel" for the needs and wants of local citizens. Extension agents who choose to become members of local civic organizations and other community groups use those groups as a means of strengthening their ties to the community. Trips to the local grocery store put Extension agents in contact with local citizens who will often stop to chat in the store aisles about their needs and issues. A cup of coffee in a donut shop or fast food restaurant where community leaders congregate can serve as an excellent opportunity for strengthening linkages with the "movers and shakers" of the community.

At times our encounters with local citizens are completely serendipitous. In other words they occur by chance. Other times they are strategic in nature. For example, an Extension agent may seek membership in a particular community group or attend a community function for the sole purpose of building linkages with particular citizens or community leaders.

Inventory of Needs and Assets

As we build linkages with the public, we undoubtedly uncover information regarding what local citizens expect or desire from Extension. Assuming that the information received comes from a representative cross-section of citizens, expressed needs and wants may be a fairly sound basis for setting program priorities. Many times, however, citizens do not know all there is to know about the county in which they live. Their knowledge of the county may be limited to a particular area of interest or the part of the county in which they reside. As a result, the opinions they form regarding needed programs are often based on limited information.

So even when we base program priorities on input from of a broadly representative County Extension Council, our programming sometimes fails to target important community issues. One way to combat that problem is to help council members learn as much as possible about their county before engaging them in the process of setting program priorities. This is best done by involving individual members of the County Extension Council in collecting data that would comprise an inventory of needs and assets.

An inventory of needs and assets involves taking a systematic look at the county as a whole prior to making judgements about what programs are needed. Ideally, members of the County Extension Council would take responsibility for gathering data about the county themselves. (Some members of the Council may have access to some types of data that Extension staff would have difficulty acquiring.) One member may volunteer to gather economic data. Another may choose to gather data about family life, and so on. Other areas to explore might include education, environment, health, housing, agriculture, population trends, and recreation.

Recently, there has been considerable discussion regarding the type of information that should be collected about a community. Historically, efforts to assess program needs focused upon collecting information which identified the problems, deficits, or negative aspects of a particular geographic area. Programs which addressed the worst situations were seen as the most justified. But this cycle of continually depicting certain populations or regions as continually deficient has resulted in the development of an alternative approach to situational analysis that looks at assets rather than needs. Advocates for such an approach contend that looking at what a county has "going for it" establishes a more positive point of departure for a discussion about potential programs. Using this approach one would inventory the "best" features of a county and use those positive assets to address social, economic, or environmental concerns that advocates for the approach would say are more or less self-evident.

A danger of using the asset-based approach is that it may cause a planning group to overlook critical issues that may not be revealed through an examination of positives. For example, research may show that the dietary habits of a particular group of people traditionally underserved by Extension place them at risk for certain health problems. The asset-based approach may fail to identify this as a target area for potential programming.

So perhaps the best method for analyzing the state of affairs that exists in particular county is to collect data which reflects both the **positive and negative** aspects of a county. This balanced approach is more likely to result in an accurate judgements about what Extension should focus resources on in a given county.

There are a number of methods for gathering data about a particular county. In some cases, gathering information about the county is as simple as tapping into one or more existing data sources. Other times we want to collect information that no one else has collected. When this is the case, there are a number of simple data collection methods that can be used for collecting data above and beyond what is available through existing data sources.

Existing Data

Data that has already been collected by another organization or agency is often referred to as "existing data." Such data can be obtained from a variety of sources.

Statistical data, such as that collected through the United States Census, provide us with information that can be as general or specific as we require. You can usually access Census data about your county on the World Wide Web.

Other compilations of statistical data found in such documents as the Kentucky Kids Count County Data Book provide data specific to a particular area of concern or emphasis. Periodically, Extension specialists will provide counties with summaries of data relevant to their area of expertise.

Marketing associations, chambers of commerce, boards of education, county health departments, local libraries, police departments, and other local agencies can provide additional information useful in determining the local situation. Often, other agencies have conducted their own needs assessment and are willing to share the results.

Collecting Your Own Data

Remember, descriptions of current situations are comprised not only of factual data, but also include opinions, feelings, beliefs, and perceptions of the citizens of the county. You will probably have difficulty finding existing data of this type. Therefore, you may need to use one of several common methods for collecting data that reflects how people perceive the current situation.

Surveys - In most surveys, individuals are asked to respond to written questions. Most commonly, these questions relate to the values, opinions, feelings, and beliefs of respondents. Since surveys are generally confidential or anonymous, they will often generate more candid responses than will face-to-face methods. Surveys may be mailed or administered to a group in person. Survey questions can be either closed-ended (where respondents choose from a list of possible responses) or open-ended (where respondents are free to develop their own response).

Individual Interviews - During an interview, information is obtained by asking individuals to respond verbally to specific questions. Telephone and face-to-face interviews can be used to collect much of the same type of information as is collected with surveys. As with surveys, interviews can include both closed- and open-ended questions. Interviews, however, allow for clarification of both questions and responses.

Group Assessment - Group assessment involves a systematic discussion of a particular topic by a purposefully selected group of participants. Group methods allow for in-depth consideration of a subject and provide a variety of insights. This format also allows for interaction between participants. The interviewer has the flexibility to guide the discussion in accordance with a general outline.

Observations - There is much to be learned about a county or community by simply keeping your eyes and ears open. Some call this "research by walking around." The goal of observation is to see the world through the eyes of others. Information may be collected by watching, listening, and documenting what is observed; by asking questions; by sharing activities and noting comments, behaviors, and reactions; or a combination of these. Observations may give interesting insights regarding homelessness, youth issues, and consumer preferences.

Key Informants - In any community, there are a number of individuals who, because of their unique position within the community, can provide important information relevant to the process of establishing program priorities. For example, an operator of a farm supply store might be able to provide important

information regarding fertilizer sales. A school principal might be of assistance in identifying some of the needs of young people in the community.

A face-to-face interview is the most commonly used method of collecting information from key informants. After key informants are identified, an appointment is made to conduct the interview. During the interview, the key informant responds to a predetermined set of questions related to community needs and assets. Interviews may be conducted by either Extension staff or members of the County Extension Council.

Media Scan - Another method for gathering data about a county is to systematically review the content of news articles and editorials appearing in local newspapers and on local radio and television stations. These are often excellent sources of information regarding the issues people are concerned about locally.

Asset Mapping - Asset mapping is a relatively new method of situational analysis that is rapidly gaining in popularity. Asset mapping tends to focus on positive aspects of the community rather than its negative features. To construct an asset map, local citizens graphically chart the positive features of the county on either an actual or schematic map of their county. Asset maps often make use of readily available GIS data about their county. As citizens plot the community's assets, data patterns provide information about the nature and scope of programming that may be relevant to the issues of the citizens. Most importantly, asset mapping identifies the resources that the county has to draw on as it moves forward in addressing local issues.

Identification of Program Opportunities

To this point, we discussed ways in which the Cooperative Extension Service builds linkages with local citizens and involves them in collecting information about their community through an inventory of needs and assets. We are now ready to examine the process of **giving meaning** to the data we have collected. The first step in this process is to share the information that has been collected with all of the members of the County Extension Council.

Data can be presented either in written form or through a formal presentation at a County Extension Council Meeting. Either agents or council members may be involved in presenting data. However, individuals selected to present data should try to avoid letting personal biases, values, and beliefs interfere with presenting an accurate picture of the county. Even when such biases are present, a County Extension Council that reflects diversity in the backgrounds and experiences of its members helps assure a balanced interpretation of the local situation.

Giving Meaning to Data

Members of the County Extension Council bring with them a set of life experiences that shape the way they view the world around them. That set of experiences also determines how they interpret data.

When presented with a set of data about the community individuals will try to give "value" to the data making a judgement about it. They compare the data with an ideal or preferred state that is a product of the expectations or dreams they have for themselves or the community.

When the information meets or exceeds our expectations, dreams, or aspirations we are often pleased with the current situation. When that information indicates that we are falling short of those expectations, dreams, or aspirations the disparity causes a **tension** within us. Historically that tension has been referred to as a **need**.

The Concept of Need

A need is defined as a state of tension produced by the gap between a present set of circumstances

and a set of expected or desired circumstances. We often depict that gap as a chasm that we wish to traverse. To move from one side of the chasm to the other, we may decide that a "bridge" that needs to be built to span the gap. The bridge is analogous to the Extension programs that move individuals or communities to the improved conditions they desire. Needs arise from a variety of sources and can be categorized as follows:

Basic Needs - needs related to sustaining life such as food, clothing, and shelter. When such things are absent, a basic need is said to exist.

Felt or Expressed Needs - the things we consciously recognize that we want, above and beyond the basics. (We want good schools.)

Normative - needs that relate to a standard or norm (How does the nutrient intake of a particular group compare to recommended daily allowances. Is there a need for nutrition education?)

Comparative - needs identified when we compare our situation with that of others. (A neighboring county has a city recreation program and because of the contributions it makes to the community, we feel that such a program would be beneficial in our county.)

Who's Needs?

As we mentioned earlier, everyone will have their own interpretation of the situational data. The Extension professionals will have their own interpretation as well. Although professional staff members should avoid letting personal biases, values, and beliefs interfere with the presentation of an accurate picture of the county, that does not mean that the agent is not involved in the interpretation of the data. Many times the professional training and experience of agents may provide valuable insights into what the data are telling us.

Often agents are able to see relationships that exist from seemingly unrelated pieces of information that many of the CEC members may overlook. But such insight should be presented as being informational in nature and not as a means of "lobbying" for development of a particular program.

It is quite likely that after reviewing the data, members of the County Extension Council will generate a long list of needs that are potential targets for Extension programming. That list will generally include more than can reasonably be addressed by the staff of that county. But reaching consensus around priority needs can be difficult.

Priority Setting

Since we can't do everything, it is important to engage in some sort of process to set program priorities. But how should we go about the process of deciding where to focus our efforts?

Generally, priority setting is done by examining each identified need in light of a set of criteria that helps to determine either the magnitude of the issue or the prospects for making meaningful impact.

These criteria can include:

- the relative importance of the issue,
- the number of people affected,

- the importance of the topic to local officials,
- Extension's ability to respond,
- the County Extension Council's interest and support,
- and the related efforts of other organizations and agencies.

The process of priority setting is analogous to sifting beach sand through a sieve. The sieve can be thought of as the set of criteria by which we judge the various needs. While the majority of the sand flows freely through the sieve, several particles are of a size that prevents them from flowing through. These larger grains of sand are analogous to high priority issues we choose to address through our programming.

But even when using such criteria, individual members of a council may reach different conclusions the significance of a particular need. They may also rate the prospects of making a significant impact differently as well. But there are several ways of moving the group to consensus on the needs issues upon which Extension should focus their attention during the next planning period. A few of them are summarized below.

Voting - This decision-making process allows all members of a group members to express their personal preferences. This quick and easy method is consistent with our democratic principles. On the other hand, voting also tends to limit discussion and creates winners and losers. However, with a skilled facilitator leading discussion before voting, this process may be an effective way for the group to come to agreement. Steps involved in voting are:

1. Brainstorm ideas for potential programs. List ideas on flipchart paper.
2. Ideas are clarified and discussed. Duplications are eliminated.
3. Members vote on ideas appearing on the list. They may vote with a show of hands, adhesive dots, or secret ballot. Remember, secret ballots may reduce social pressure to conform. Instruct them to vote for as many as five or six choices.
4. Top choices become program priorities.

Modified Delphi Technique - This technique utilizes multiple rounds of voting to derive consensus about program priorities. An advantage of this technique is that it solicits independent responses and negates strong personalities. If a person's individual choices do not make it to the next round of voting, they are forced to consider the remaining choices in subsequent rounds. This often leads to greater consensus around programming that the entire council is willing to support. Although it is especially useful when it is impractical to convene a group meeting, it can also be used in a group setting with some modification.

Steps involved in using the Delphi are:

1. Brainstorm ideas for potential programs. List ideas on flipchart paper and eliminate any duplication.
2. Individuals review the list and independently vote for five items.
3. The facilitator tallies the votes and lists 10-12 items receiving the most votes on the first ballot into a new list.
4. Individuals vote again, but this time they only vote for three items.
5. Steps 3 and 4 may be repeated until a workable set of program priorities are established. Fewer items appear on each subsequent ballot and participants are instructed to select fewer

choices each time they vote.

6. Items with the most votes in the last round become program priorities.

Modified Nominal Group Technique - A structured procedure for generating ideas, evaluating alternatives, and making decisions, this process assures a balanced input from all participants. It takes advantage of members' expertise and personal experiences by combining individual ratings with group discussion. Steps involved include:

1. Divide members into small groups of 5-7 participants each.
2. Individuals work independently to generate their own list of program priorities. Ask them to write three or four of the ideas they feel most strongly about on 5½" X 8½" sheets of paper with a large marking pen. Participants should only put only one idea on each sheet.
3. Individuals share their ideas with other members of their group in round-robin fashion. Each member contributes only one idea during their turn.
4. Ideas are discussed and clarified in each small group.
5. Small groups select three or four ideas that all members of the small group can support as priorities.
6. Small groups present their ideas in round-robin fashion to the total group. Groups share only one idea per turn. After sharing each idea, a representative of the group posts the sheet of paper containing the idea to a bulletin board or adhesive board. The papers can also be taped to a wall.
7. All ideas are discussed and clarified. Like ideas are combined.
8. Members individually rank the ideas presented. This eliminates any social pressure to conform.
9. An average ranking is calculated for each item. Items with the lowest scores become program priorities.

Determining Major Areas of Programming

As we have seen, the process of determining programming priorities results in a set of high priority issues or topics around which our plan of work will be built. These high priority issues or topics that are identified through the priority setting process are referred to as **County Major Areas of Programming** or **C-MAPs**. Each county is expected to identify between five and eight C-MAPs. This number varies, however, depending on such things as staff size and the scope of the C-MAPs identified.

Naming the Major Areas of Programming

Everything needs a name. The same is true for the Major Areas of Programming that have just been identified. So, somewhere in the process of determining program priorities, we need to develop "handles" or titles by which we refer to the high priority topics or issues we plan to address. Some examples of C-MAP titles include "Maintaining Health through Improved Diet" or "Increasing Farm Profits through Diversification"

There are several things to consider when evaluating potential names for a C-MAP. First of all, does the name communicate an intended action? (For example, "Improving Water Quality" better states intention

than does "Water Quality.") Second, does the name have appeal to decision makers? The public? The County Extension Council? Third, does the name accurately reflect the scope of the issue that will be addressed? Finally, is the name concise, meaningful, and free from jargon?

Making a Public Commitment to Action

How many members of the general public could identify the major program thrusts of Extension in your county? Perhaps not as many as we would like to think. And, surprisingly, many frequent users of Extension have little knowledge of the scope of the entire Extension program.

It is our responsibility as Extension employees to inform the public of the nature of our programs. Historically, we have done most of this through formal reports after programs have been conducted. But major American corporations have shown that they can actually create interest in such things as new software and movies about to be released by promoting the product while it is still under development.

So, once the list of S-MAPs is finalized, it becomes important to publicly proclaim what Extension will be working on in the next couple of years. News releases and general flyers about Extension should include references to major program thrusts.

Of course, you won't want to use the acronym "C-MAP" with the public. Something like "program thrusts" might be more appropriate. Making the public aware of your county's program thrusts can pay many dividends. It lets the public know what you are doing, helps identify potential collaborators, and may result in additional funds being appropriated for your efforts.

Identifying and Engaging Collaborators

We have seen how the County Extension Council is involved in identifying high priority topics and issues (C-MAPs) around which Extension programming efforts might focus. And although the CEC may help to identify critical areas where programming is needed, often the membership of the council will not possess either the expertise or time required to guide work on any single C-MAP. Therefore, it is often desirable to assemble a set of program planning teams that would be responsible for developing specific program plans for each of the C-MAPs.

Some of these planning groups may be existing advisory councils. For example, the 4-H Council may accept a leadership role for a C-MAP relating to a youth issue. But other times it may be beneficial to create a new planning group that cuts across program areas and brings in new program partners.

A typical planning group might include interested agents, council members, other Extension volunteers, local citizens, and representatives of collaborating organizations or agencies. (Hopefully, during the situation analysis you discovered some other organizations that had similar interests or goals.)

The degree of formality of groups may vary greatly, but in all cases there should be more than just Extension staff sitting down to decide on the specific nature of programming related to a C-MAP.

County Situational Statement

As you develop your county plan of work, the Extension team in each county will be asked to prepare a two or three page narrative statement that documents the process your county went through in developing your set of C-MAPs. This ***County Situational Statement*** highlights the major findings of your Inventory of Needs and Assets along with the process you used to involve local citizens in setting program priorities. The narrative should also build a case for the Major Areas of Programming that have been identified for inclusion in the current plan of work. The County Situational Statement should also include a list of the C-MAPs that were identified.

The County Situational Statement is primarily an internal document, but can be a valuable reference for county staff at a later date. But now, it's time to develop program plans for the C-MAPs that have been identified.

Chapter 5: Developing the Annual Plan of Work

Generally, C-MAPs identified through the program determination process have a life span of at least four years. However, counties may add, drop, or modify C-MAPs at any time should the situation warrant. But plans of work are developed annually. The Annual Plan of Work communicates what will be done during the next twelve months that is specifically related to addressing the needs or issues which underlie the county's C-MAPs.

The Annual Plan of Work submitted by a county includes an individual program plan for each C-MAP. As mentioned earlier, most counties identify between five and eight C-MAPs. Consequently, the plan of work will include between five and eight program plans.

It is important to remember that C-MAPs are county-level program *thrusts* and are not designed to include all the work we intend to do in an individual county. But how much of the total program should be represented in the plan? For most counties, efforts identified in the Plan of Work will represent less than 50 percent of the agent's time. But, in some counties, a large majority of that time may be devoted directly to the C-MAPs. But, be sure that only the activities directly related to achieving the outcomes identified for the C-MAPs are included in the program plan.

Developing a plan of work for a C-MAP begins with identifying the intended **outcomes** of our programming. We then set criteria for determining the success of our efforts by identifying outcome **indicators**. Finally, we identify and plan the **educational experiences** that research and experience suggests will be effective in achieving the desired outcomes. Although the process is rather simple and intuitive, it is a substantial departure from the practice of "looking at what we are currently doing and seeing what C-MAP it fits under."

Desired SEEC, Practices, and KOSA

In 1975, Claude Bennett developed what he termed a "hierarchy" of evidence in Extension programming. By evidence, Bennett was referring to information which could attest to the results that a particular program achieved. In the model, he identified seven "levels" of evidence, each representing evaluation data that communicates greater impact than the level preceding it.

The original model was used primarily in an evaluation context to encourage Extension staff to report more meaningful evaluation data. In 1995, Bennett and Rockwell released a revision of original model in an effort to increase its utility in program planning. The seven levels of the revised model are listed below. The lowest level of evidence is characterized by a description of inputs and is listed at the bottom of the list. The highest level of evidence is represented by changes occurring in social, economic, or environmental conditions.

- Social, Economic, or Environmental Conditions (SEEC) - how social, economic, or environmental conditions for an individual, group, or community changed as a result of the program.
- Practice Change - what program participants did as a result of the program.
- Knowledge, Opinions, Skills, and Aspirations (KOSA) - what personal changes occurred as a result of the program (participants learned new knowledge, changed opinions, developed new skills, identified future actions)
- Reactions - participants' feelings about the program.
- Participation - number and characteristics of people who participated in the program.
- Activities - what was done; the direct or indirect interaction of the participant with the educator.
- Inputs - resources expended for the program (time, dollars, volunteer hours).

In a planning context, the model can be viewed as a ***chain of events*** that we wish to set in motion by our commitment to embark upon a particular programming thrust. For example, the resources we commit to a program allow us to conduct planned educational activities. Educational activities are designed to attract program participants. Participants have either positive or negative reactions to the program, and so on. Positive reactions to a program allow learning to occur. Learning can trigger desired behavioral changes. And changes in practices or behaviors can improve social, economic, or environmental conditions.

The top three levels of the hierarchy (KOSA, Practice, and SEEC) can be classified as **outcomes**. Given the recent importance assigned to measuring outcomes, our planning process requires that agents identify ***desired outcomes*** of programming. Desired outcomes are those changes that we anticipate will occur as a result of our programs. In our planning process, we sequentially identify three types of outcomes - desired changes in social, economic, or environmental conditions (SEEC), desired changes in the behaviors or practices of program participants (Practice), and desired changes in knowledge, opinions, skills, or aspirations of those who participate (KOSA).

Desired SEEC (Long-Term Outcomes)

The first step in developing a program plan for a C-MAP begins with identifying the Social, Economic, or Environmental Conditions (SEEC) that the program is intended to produce. In many cases, it may take several years for a program to produce measureable SEEC-level outcomes. As a result, statements which describe the desired SEEC-level outcomes for a particular C-MAP will probably remain unchanged for the four years the C-MAP is in existence. SEEC-level outcomes can also be referred to as long-term outcomes.

Some examples of the type of SEEC-level changes that a program may intend to produce include a reduced incidence of a preventable illness, increased agricultural revenues, or increased academic performance. When possible, include a specific target that you are striving to reach as you describe the desired conditions.

Desired Practices (Intermediate Outcomes)

Desired practices are those behaviors or actions which people must perform if the desired social, economic, or environmental conditions identified above are to be achieved. For example, a reduction in child abuse may be achieved if parents learn and begin using alternate forms of discipline and correction. Certain production practices lead to higher yields. A family choosing to recycle can result in less solid waste in landfills.

Statements of desired practices which are included in the program plan for a C-MAP may change year to year as the nature and scope activity around a C-MAP changes over the four year period.

Desired KOSA (Initial Outcomes)

If a desired practice is to be performed, program participants must know about the practice and believe that it is better than their current way of doing things. They must also know how to perform it and have intentions do so. Consequently, stating the changes in knowledge, opinions, skills, and aspirations that a program is intended to produce is an important part of program planning.

Perhaps the most common KOSA-level outcomes are the acquisition of knowledge or development of a skill. For example, a desired outcome of nutrition program might be for program participants to know how many servings per day they need from each of the major food groups. Unlike, SEEC- and practice-level changes, KOSA level changes in participants can be measured during or immediately after conclusion of a learning experience.

Statements of desired KOSA included in the program plan for a C-MAP will likely change from year to year. Annual updates of the plan allow for such modifications.

Selecting Impact Indicators

By describing the SEEC-, Practice-, and KOSA-level changes our programs are intended to set in motion, we are in a much improved position for being able to measure program performance. At least know what type of changes we are looking for! But we must still decide on which **indicators** we will use to determine if the desired changes in SEEC, Practices, or KOSA were actually achieved. We must also make decisions regarding how we intend to measure the indicator.

Specifying impact indicators is simply a process of answering the question "What information will I use to determine if the desired outcome has been achieved?" As you decide upon impact indicators, you have the flexibility of deciding whether you wish to measure changes in SEEC, Practices, or KOSA resulting from your programs. You may develop as many indicators and measurement procedures as you feel are necessary to demonstrate the success of the program to stakeholders.

It is quite likely that changes in social, economic or environmental conditions will not be observed in the first year of programming. But it is quite likely that participants in a three-day conference would experience some knowledge gain in the subjects being taught. It is also quite likely that a participant in a workshop on diet and health may actually change their eating habits in a short period of time. So techniques such as end-of-meeting evaluations and follow-up questionnaires may help you document such changes.

As a designer of the program, you choose what you want to use as an indicator of success. The indicator could be scores on a test, percent of participants found to be practicing a new skill six weeks after a workshop, or increases in correct use of child restraints in motor vehicles as documented in police records.

In this section of the plan of work, tell what "indicator" you will use to determine program success over the coming year and how you plan to collect that information. There are undoubtedly many indicators that you could select to demonstrate impact. The indicators and measurement techniques you select may

change from year to year as the plan of work is revised.

Planning Educational Experiences

After outcomes and indicators are selected, decisions can then be made about the specific learning experiences to be conducted. Many times, however, it is at this point that we fall into the trap of looking solely at our existing events and activities and "plugging them into" the C-MAPs we have selected. In the past, things such as general newsletters, meetings, and farm visits have been listed as planned educational experiences. In such cases, the C-MAP was simply used as a means of putting everything that an agent was currently doing somewhere in the plan. That is not to say that ongoing activities should not be included in plans of work. But they should only be included if there is clear link between that activity and achievement of the desired outcomes.

Educational experiences are defined as those planned and purposeful interactions with clientele that are designed to result in outcomes. Some individuals use *learning experience* or *educational method* as synonyms for educational experience. Educational experiences create the environment and conditions in which learners gain knowledge, acquires skills, heightens aspirations, or changes their opinions.

Methods are divided into three general types: (1) contact on an *individual* basis through such things as home visits, client visits to the office, or electronic means (2) contact in *groups* as with workshops, seminars, meetings, and conferences, and (3) *mass media* contact through newspapers, radio, and television. Some new technologies such as video and computers transcend characterization as either individual, group, or mass media. For example, the internet can be used to send an electronic mail message to an individual, to connect a group together for dialogue, or to reach great masses of individuals through a web site.

As we have said, educational experiences must, first and foremost, be related to the KOSA outcomes we are trying to achieve. (And KOSA outcomes are directly related to achievement of Practice and SEEC outcomes.) But the selection of learning experiences or methods must also be based on several other important factors. A few of these include:

- Subject Matter or Content - The subject matter or content that is presented will vary according to the outcomes we desire. Similarly, the methods or educational experiences we plan will depend on the subject matter being presented.
- Audience - All audiences are different. They vary in educational level, age, race, experience, and income. And individuals within groups are different from each other. Consequently, we should examine not only the target audience as a whole but the learning preferences of individuals, as well. By varying teaching methods used in presentations we are able to accommodate a number of individual learning styles. Or, better yet, look beyond group settings as the only means of presenting information.
- Logistics - Several questions related to logistics affect selection of methods. Is the equipment needed to use a method readily available? How much lead time is available for preparation? Are staff skilled in use of the method? Is there a cost factor?

Careful attention to each of these factors will result in the selection of methods that provide the greatest likelihood of accomplishing the desired outcomes of the program.

Mobilize Resources

Identifying resources needed to accomplish desired outcomes is an important part of planning. During the Inventory of Needs and Assets you undoubtedly discovered a number of resources which are available in your community. Often, members of the planning group that has been involved in developing the program plan for a particular C-MAP will be a valuable resource to draw upon. Often members of planning groups have access to facilities, resources, or individuals that agents may not have.

The first step in mobilizing resources is to ask yourself the question, "What do I need to get the job done?" Resources may be financial, human, or in-kind. If financial resources are needed, are grants available or is other public or private funding accessible? What human resources will be required for this method or sequence of experiences? How many volunteers are required? What kind of technical expertise will be needed? Can it be found within the community or will I need to look outside? Finally, what kind of in-kind resources are needed? These often include buildings, meeting rooms, refreshments, and publicity. In the acquisition of in-kind resources, no actual exchange of funds takes place and the resource is provided without charge.

Chapter 6: Evaluation and Accountability

Earlier in this document we introduced a framework for articulating the chain of events to be set in motion by our programming efforts (Bennett and Rockwell, 1995). That model was used as a framework for developing a plan of work. At this point, we will call your attention to the model once again. But, this time we will examine it in the context of program evaluation.

Again, the lowest level of evidence is characterized by a description of inputs and is listed at the bottom of the list. The highest level of evidence is represented by changes in social, economic, or environmental conditions resulting from the program.

- Social, Economic, or Environmental Conditions (SEEC) - how social, economic, or environmental conditions for an individual, group, or community changed as a result of the

program.

- Practice Change - what program participants did as a result of the program.
- Knowledge, Opinions, Skills, and Aspirations (KOSA) - what personal changes occurred as a result of the program (participants learned new knowledge, changed opinions, developed new skills, identified future actions)
- Reactions - participants' feelings about the program.
- Participation - number and characteristics of people who participated in the program.
- Activities - what was done; the direct or indirect interaction of the participant with the educator.
- Inputs - resources expended for the program (time, dollars, volunteer hours).

During our conversations with stakeholders, we can talk about what happened at any level of this hierarchy. We can tell them about how much time we devoted to the program. We can tell them what educational experiences were provided. We can tell them how many people participated. We may even want to tell stakeholders how satisfied the participants were with the program. But this type of information only tells stakeholders about the **process** used to produce desired outcomes and nothing about the outcomes themselves.

Another option is to tell stakeholders what participants learned. Or we might want to tell them about what people are doing with the information they received. Or maybe something about how program participants are better off as a result of participating in our program. When we share this information with stakeholders we communicate the **outcomes** of our programs.

Some stakeholders want information about the process (how much money was spent, how many participated). Others want information about the outcomes of our program (what participants learned, how they are better off because of the program). We must therefore be prepared to provide information from multiple levels of the hierarchy.

Types of Evaluation

Program evaluation provides us with useful information for making decisions. In the most general sense, we use the information generated through evaluation for (1) making decisions about the educational process and (2) the degree to which desired outcomes were achieved. We refer to these two types of evaluation as **process evaluation** and **outcome evaluation**. In Extension, we collect and report data of both types.

Process Evaluation

Over the years, Extension professionals have become quite good at process evaluation. We calculate how much time we devote to a particular program (Inputs). We document what was done (Activities). And we keep detailed records regarding who participated in our programs and their characteristics (Participation). Collecting this type of information is quite routine and does not require the use of any special data collection methods.

Other times we want to get information from program participants regarding their reactions to the

program. In these cases, we need to utilize some sort of data gathering technique that allows us to get information about program quality from the participants. There are three simple techniques for getting participant reactions to programs. These are end-of-meeting questionnaires, solicitation of comments, and focus groups.

End-of-meeting Questionnaires - Perhaps the most common process evaluation tool is the end-of-meeting questionnaire. Program participants are asked to rate such things as the relevance of the material presented, quality of the instruction, and logistical details using rating scales and multiple-choice questions. They can also include open-ended questions. More and more these questionnaires are being used to assess the overall level of "customer" satisfaction with the program.

Solicitation of Comments - One way of getting participant reactions to programs is to use comment cards. Less formal than end-of-meeting questionnaires, comment cards usually include three or four open-ended questions about the quality of the program or how quality could be improved in the future. An alternative to distributing cards to all participants is to write each question on a piece of poster paper leaving space for participants to write responses below the question. Questions can also be administered orally in a group setting.

Focus Groups - A focus group is a purposefully selected group of between 6 to 12 individuals brought together for the purpose of gathering information about your program. During a focus group discussion, a moderator typically asks no more than five or six questions related program quality or how it can be improved. The group setting actually enriches the quality of the data produced by allowing group members to interact with one another and expand upon one another's ideas.

Outcome Evaluation

Outcome evaluation can be defined as a form program evaluation which assesses the extent to which a program was effective in producing intended outcomes. Outcomes, we said, are generally viewed as benefits for people such as new knowledge, modified behavior, or altered status (United Way of America, 1997; Bennett and Rockwell, 1995; Kirkpatrick, 1994). But what outcomes should we measure and how should we go about measuring them?

During our program planning process, we specified the **desired changes** in SEEC, Practice, and KOSA that we believed our program for a particular C-MAP was likely to produce. We also indicated **what** we were planning to measure and **how** we were planning to measure it. So, the answer to the question about what to measure in the program evaluation phase was answered when you wrote the plan of work! But let's review a few of the evaluation methods we might want to use to measure KOSA, Practice, and SEEC outcomes.

Measuring KOSA-Level Outcomes

There are several evaluation methods suitable for measuring KOSA-Level outcomes these include end-of-meeting questionnaires, testing, activities and games, and checklists.

End-of Meeting Questionnaires - Earlier we discussed the use of end-of meeting questionnaires as a method of gathering data for process evaluation. But we can also use end of meeting questionnaires to find out if program participants gained knowledge, changed their opinions, learned a new skill, or heightened their aspirations. Many end-of-meeting questionnaires ask participants to choose from a list of words or phrases one which best describes how much they believe they learned as a result of a program. Others ask them to indicate how likely they are to put what they learned into practice. It is important to realize that questionnaires which ask participants what they learned or what they can do as a result of a program do not always accurately assess the amount of learning that took place. Participants may overestimate or underestimate what they learned. When more accurate assessments of learning are needed, testing may be a desirable alternative.

Testing - Tests differ from questionnaires in that they include questions which content experts can

agree are correct. In general, competency tests assess the degree to which an individual has mastered a particular domain of learning. Competency tests may include binary choice (true/false and yes/no), multiple choice, or matching questions. Performance tests are used to determine whether or not a learner performs a behavior correctly. Trained observers are often asked to use rating scales and checklists to judge whether or not in individual performs an action correctly.

Activities and Games - There are a number of ways to test for KOSA-level outcomes using activities and games. One way would be to give participants pennies which they can place into one of four paper bags corresponding to the various choices of a multiple choice question. The number of pennies in each bag can be counted to determine the percentage who got the question correct.

Checklists - Earlier we discussed the use of checklists by trained observers to rate the degree to which a participant a mastered a skill. But checklists can also be completed by participants themselves. For example, participants might be asked to check all of the items on a list that they intend to do in the future.

Measuring Practice-Level Outcomes

Changes in practice-level changes can be measured only after the participant has had an opportunity to implement new practices or behaviors. That opportunity may not present itself until several weeks or months after the learning experience. There are several evaluation methods suitable for measuring Practice-level outcomes. These include a show of hands, follow-up questionnaires, observers, and key informants.

Show of Hands - Many of the groups we work with have monthly meetings. Sometimes we conduct programs that require participants to attend multiple sessions over a specified period of time. In cases such as these we have automatic access to an audience at various points in the future. A simple way to see if program participants have begun performing practices learned at a previous session is to use a show of hands. As various practices are read from a list, participants raise their hands if they have performed the practice.

Follow-up Questionnaire - A questionnaire can also be used to determine whether or not program participants have put what they learned into practice. Often, participants are simply asked to place a checkmark by each action they have done since participating in the program. Other times they are asked to indicate the frequency with which they now perform a particular behavior. When it is likely that program participants were already performing a particular behavior before the program, participants are often asked to indicate the frequency with which they performed the behavior before the program as well as after. Follow-up questionnaires are often mailed to participants, but can be administered in person.

Observers - Many times, behavioral changes in program participants can be observed by individuals who have no connection to a program you conduct. Potential observers might include parents, teachers, or workplace supervisors. Observers are often asked to complete questionnaires or checklists which document behaviors of the program participant they are observing.

Measuring SEEC-Level Outcomes

Methods of documenting SEEC-level outcomes include the use of existing data, calculations, individual experience, and questionnaires.

Existing Data - During our inventory of needs and assets we identified a number of data sources that could provide information about the current social, economic, or environmental conditions which exist in a particular area. Assuming that the scope of our program was broad enough to make an appreciable difference on a particular social, economic, or environmental issue it may be appropriate to return to the same data sources during our program evaluation efforts to see if changes have occurred in the conditions targeted by the program.

Calculations - Sometimes it is possible to calculate changes in social, economic or environmental conditions by assigning a value to a particular practice that program participants implement. For example, we may know the economic benefit of a particular agricultural practice or the health benefits resulting from a particular dietary practice. Many times we are able to multiply the value of the practice by the number of people performing it to generate an estimated SEEC-level benefit for the total program.

Individual Experience - There are a number of techniques for documenting the benefits that individuals or small groups of individuals receive from our programs. These include case studies, success stories, testimonials, and the use of key informants. When using a case study, an individual or small group for study is selected in advance and tracked throughout the program. Benefits to the individual or group are then observed and recorded. Success stories are similar to case studies in many ways except that individuals or groups experiencing positive outcomes are identified after the program is completed. Key informants are individuals who, because of their unique relationship with a program, can provide meaningful information about a program's impact through interviews we conduct with them. Testimonials involve program participants making oral statements about how a program has affected them personally.

Questionnaire - In addition to using questionnaires for other purposes mentioned above, questionnaires can also be used to gather data regarding how the quality of life has improved for participants as a result of a particular program. Instead of asking questions about what they learned or what they have done since the program, we might ask questions about how much money they saved as a result of the program or how particular indicators of health have improved.

Reporting Accomplishments

For the past few years, the IMPAK reporting system has allowed Extension staff to report a wide variety of evaluation data useful to Extension's accountability efforts. While the plan-of-work module is used to develop and submit program plans for each of the county's C-MAPs, three components of the IMPAK system are used to collect information about significant accomplishments. These are the Monthly Statistical Reports, Impact Statements, and the Annual Report of Priority Indicators.

The Monthly Statistical Report is used by Extension employees to record the amount of time they devote to various program thrusts. For each block of time reported, the individual completing the report also records the number of contacts made with clientele during that time block. All professionals and paraprofessionals are required to submit monthly statistical reports. The data collected through this module are used to generate a profile of how the organization is utilizing its human resources in terms of days expended toward various programmatic thrusts and to document our compliance with various civil rights and affirmative action requirements. It also provides county staff with important data for sharing with local decision-makers.

Impact Statements are brief narrative statements which summarize significant outcomes of Extension programming. In general, Impact Statements should be roughly a third of a page in length and focus on a single theme or program. Impact Statements should include a discussion of (1) the importance of the issue being addressed, (2) the role of Extension in achieving the results (3) the nature of the educational program that was conducted, and (4) the impact realized and the evaluation method used to measure it. They may or may not focus directly on outcomes resulting from work related to the C-MAPs. County Extension Agents are to submit approximately 5 to 8 Impact Statements per year. They may be submitted at any time of the year.

Report of Priority Indicators - Each year, the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service collects data for approximately 30 to 40 standard indicators of program impact. The indicators were developed by teams of Extension professionals who were assigned the task of identifying a set of measures that could be used to gauge the organization's progress toward the achievement of its strategic goals. Data for the priority indicators is submitted annually.

Accountability

Accountability, in short, means getting evaluation results into the hands of people who need it for decision-making. We use what we call a "stakeholder" approach to guide our accountability efforts.

A stakeholder can be defined as any individual who has a "stake" or interest in the performance of an organization, its programs, or employees. So, the first task in our efforts to be accountable is to determine who the stakeholders are and what type of information they desire. Can you think of some stakeholders and the type of information they might want?

Certainly the planning groups that were a part of the program development process are stakeholders. Local officials and legislators are stakeholders. So are Extension administrators. You are a stakeholder. And program participants themselves are interested in the success of the program. Are there others?

Once stakeholders have been identified, it is important to examine their individual information needs. Each stakeholder will probably require slightly different information because they use the information for different purposes. Some of these purposes include program improvement, personnel appraisal, funding, and for planning future programs.

The method you choose for getting information to stakeholders will vary according to stakeholder needs. Some stakeholders might want a brief written summary of key accomplishments. Others may prefer an oral presentation.

We must continually be prepared to provide stakeholders with the type of information they want and need in the format they prefer. The inability to do so may seriously jeopardize their future support of our efforts.

Summary

It is no longer sufficient to say that a program was successful because a large number of people participated. Instead, Extension staff are being called upon to show impacts on public concerns. To do so means knowing the type of outcomes one expects from Extension programs.

The process of program planning described in this publication provides a practical method for designing programs that achieve anticipated outcomes. It brings together the previously separate subprocesses of planning and reporting into a comprehensive model.

The better Extension is able to document impacts of programming that focuses on relevant issues and needs, the better the likelihood that Extension will continue to be a vital force shaping American society.

List of References

- Bennett, Claude. (1975). "Up the Hierarchy." *Journal of Extension*. Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 7-12.
- Bennett, Claude, and Kay Rockwell. (1995). *Targeting Outcomes of Programs (TOP): An Integrated Approach to Planning and Evaluation*. Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
- Boone, Edgar J. (1985). *Developing Programs in Adult Education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Boyle, Patrick, (1981). *Planning Better Programs*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Forest, Laverne, Connie McKenna, and Jane Donovan. (1986). *Connections: A "How to" Handbook for Developing Long-Range Plans and Major Programs*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Extension, Cooperative Extension Service.
- Government Accounting Office (1998). *Performance Measurement and Evaluation - Definitions and Relationships*. GAO/GGD-98-26 (966705), Washington, DC: GAO.
- Hatry, Harry P. (1997) "Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Performance Measurement for State and Local Public Agencies." *New Directions in Program Evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. Number 75.
- Horsch, Karen (1996). "Results-based Accountability Systems: Opportunities and Challenges." *The Evaluation Exchange*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project, Vol II, No.1.
- Kirkpatrick, Donald L. (1994). *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Rennekamp, Roger (1995). *A Focus on the Impacts: A Guide for Program Planners*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.
- Rennekamp, Roger A., Paul D. Warner, and Richard C. Maurer. (1996). *Methods of Program Evaluation*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.
- Rennekamp, Roger A., (1997). *Practical Strategies for Documenting Practice Change*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.
- Rennekamp, Roger A., (1997). *Using End Of Meeting Questionnaires to Assess KOSA Change*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.
- Rennekamp, Roger A., (1999). *Documenting Practice Change with Mailed Questionnaires*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.
- Teitel, Lee (1994). *The Advisory Committee Advantage: Creating Effective Strategies for Programmatic Improvement*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1, Washington, DC: George Washington University.
- Sork, Thomas J., and John Buskey. (1986). "A Descriptive and Evaluative Analysis of Program Planning Literature, 1950-1983" *Adult Education Quarterly*. Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 86-96.

United Way of America. (1996). *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach*. Alexandria, VA: United Way of America.