Creating Excellent Programs
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The Texas AgriLife Extension Service offers practical, how-to information based on university research. Our agency’s products are educational programs, and the process we use to create educational programs is called program development.

This process is the foundation of the relevant, high-quality educational programs that help fulfill our agency’s mission. The program development model (see below) has been created to help county Extension agents and specialists create effective programs. A century of developing and delivering Extension educational programs has helped us home in on the essential components in the model.

This handbook explains the program development process and the concepts for each step. Implemented properly, this process will enable you to produce excellent, relevant programs that lead to outstanding results.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Development Model

**Phase 1: PLAN**
- Step 1: Identify the issue
- Step 2: Define the situation
- Step 3: Identify and describe the target audience
- Step 4: Define intended outcomes and objectives.

**Phase 2: DESIGN**
- Step 5: Identify or develop content for the issue/topic.
- Step 6: Develop the activities and lesson plans for delivery.

**Phase 3: IMPLEMENT**
- Step 7: Deliver the content via appropriate delivery methods.
- Step 8: Measure customer satisfaction and program participation to determine needed changes.

**Phase 4: MEASURE**
- Step 9: Conduct an evaluation of the entire program to measure its impact.
- Step 10: Report the results of the program to stakeholders
- Step 11: Conduct a long-term follow-up evaluation to determine the economic impact (where appropriate).
Program development model

**Phase 1: Plan**

**Step 1. Identify the issues.**
Possible sources:
- Leadership advisory board
- Base programs
- Emerging issues
- County committees
- Specialists
- Elected officials
- Commodity groups
- State and federal mandates

**Step 2. Define the situation.**
- Scope
- Severity
- Social
- Economic
- Environmental

**Step 3. Identify and describe the target audience.**
- Primary audience—people who need the information
- Secondary audience—those who might be reached even though they are not targeted directly
- Number of people in the potential audience
- Number of people who can realistically be reached
- Audience’s current knowledge about the topic
- Audience characteristics, such as age, income, education, culture, and language

**Step 4. Define the intended outcomes.**
What changes will occur in the audience as a result of the program?
- Learning
  - Knowledge
  - Skills
  - Attitudes/beliefs
- Application
  - Behavior change
  - Adoption of best practice
  - Adoption of new technology

**Phase 2: Design**

**Step 5. Identify or develop content.**
- Available curricula on the topic
- Materials that can be adapted to teach the topic
- Materials that need to be developed
- People who will develop these materials

**Step 6. Develop the activities.**
- Types of educational activities that will be used to address this topic
- Appropriate activities for the intended results
- Appropriate activities for the target audience and for the subject matter

**Volunteer involvement and evaluation**

**Volunteer involvement**
- Leadership advisory board, a group of 10 to 20 people who help identify critical issues in the county and who serve as spokespeople for AgriLife Extension
- County committees and/or planning groups
- Specific responsibilities for implementation by committee members
- Other volunteers to help implement the program

**Evaluation**
- The issue and situation, described accurately, including data and/or statistics to support the need to address them
- The target audience, clearly defined
- Realistic intended outcomes
- Appropriate educational design and client change for the identified audience
Phase 3: Implement

Step 7. Deliver the content via appropriate methods.

To reach as many target audience members as possible, deliver the information using a variety of group, mass media, and individual methods:

**Group methods**
- Workshops
- Seminars (face to face or online)
- Tours
- Short courses (face to face or online)
- Lectures
- Field days
- Method demonstrations

**Mass media**
- Newsletters
- Blogs and/or social media
- Print media
- Television
- Radio

**Individual methods**
- Home visits
- Farm visits
- Office visits
- Consultations

Step 8: Measure customer satisfaction and participation to determine needed changes.

For Phase 3, evaluation usually focuses on customer satisfaction and limited client change:
- Percentage of the identified target audience being reached
- Program participant satisfaction with the information, methods, and instructors
- Changes needed in the program to ensure that the intended outcomes are achieved
- Increase of awareness or knowledge in the early phases

Phase 4: Measure

Step 9: Conduct an evaluation of the entire program to measure its impact.

This phase measures the program’s impact on clientele and ultimately the community, county, and state. At this stage, collect and analyze data to determine whether the program has achieved the intended client change and impact. Data can be collected using these methods:
- Surveys (in-person, mailed, or online)
- Questionnaires
- Tests
- Direct observation
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Individual measurement

If appropriate, collect data on the anticipated economic benefit to the participants.

Step 10: Report the results to stakeholders.

Stakeholders are interested in the success of programs locally and statewide. Relay your success stories to these individuals and groups:
- Participants
- Program committees and planning groups
- Leadership advisory board members
- Coworkers
- Commissioners court and other county officials
- State legislators and staff members
- Extension administrators

Step 11: Conduct a long-term follow-up evaluation to determine the program’s economic impact.

For selected programs, follow up with the program participants several months after they have completed a program to determine its economic impact. Even if you ask them for an anticipated economic benefit immediately after a program, consider taking the extra steps to ask them months later if they did benefit economically and if so, by how much.
Planning groups are instrumental in program development. Extension planning groups are composed of volunteers who help ensure that Extension programs are relevant, targeted properly, designed appropriately, delivered effectively, and evaluated and interpreted correctly. These groups not only help develop good programs, but they also serve as advocates for those programs.

Types of planning groups

Different types of planning groups are used to match the kind of help needed. The primary types are listed and defined below:

Program area committee: A long-term group that helps a county agent develop, deliver, and evaluate programs on a specific subject-matter area. Members of these groups have a wide scope of interests and diverse areas of expertise. Example: a livestock and forage committee.

Task force: A short-term group that is usually in place for 1 year or less and that is formed to help the agent with a specific program or address a narrowly defined issue. The members have expertise directly related to the issue being addressed or the program being planned. Example: a Walk Across Texas task force.

Coalition: A group that may also be short term but that generally works for at least 2 years. Members are professionals in the issue or field. Example: a financial literacy coalition composed of financial advisors, lenders, credit counselors, and other experts who plan public programs on financial education.

Leadership advisory board: A group that primarily identifies broad issues (visioning), and advocates for Extension with key stakeholders. Because this group is not subject-matter specific, it is not as involved in developing specific educational programs. It is involved in all program areas.

What does the structure look like?

The basic structure in a two- or three-agent county includes a leadership advisory board, program area committees, and a 4-H and youth advisory board. Other options are available for counties with more diverse populations and agricultural production systems.

Some counties may need many program area committees within a discipline, such as a field crops committee and a livestock committee. Or, a broad committee may be needed that comprises several task forces or coalitions, such as a family and consumer sciences committee, a Better Living for Texans task force, and a diabetes coalition. The structure should meet these criteria:

A planning group should be established for each major issue and commodity in the county.

Many counties may need only a few groups to guide programs. More groups are needed where there are multiple agents or many diverse issues. Each agent should oversee at least one planning group.
The scope of each committee should not be too narrow.

Do not create a structure that limits the oversight of individual planning groups.

An example is an agriculture agent who works in a county with diverse production, including row crops, beef cattle, small ruminants, and commercial horticulture. This county could have many program area committees—one each for corn, cotton, beef cattle, small ruminants, grapes, tree fruits, vegetables, and others.

A more manageable structure might be to have three program area committees—livestock, row crops, and horticulture—staffed with experts in the commodities produced.

The structure should meet the expectations of regional program directors and administrators.

Each year at the program planning conference or performance appraisal, county agents and regional leaders should determine the most effective structure for each county. They should also review the county’s commodities and base programs and the critical issues identified by the leadership advisory board.

A planning group should be in place to develop programs for each issue and base program. If not, determine the type of planning group needed to address the issue, whether a long-term committee or a short-term task force or coalition. Only those who are most familiar with the county and region can decide on the best type of group for that issue or base program.

Program area committees that are no longer needed because of changes in population or production should be discussed as well. The goal is to maximize the agents’ and volunteers’ time.

Summary

A planning group structure is effective only when it meets the criteria outlined above. The current structure might have been perfect 10 years ago, but is it still the most effective? Only you and your regional leadership team can answer that question. The most effective structure is fluid; it should be reviewed regularly to make sure it produces the most relevant, high-quality programs possible for your county.

The only constants across all counties are the leadership advisory board, which may serve as the community development committee, and a 4-H youth advisory board. Beyond these two boards, each county can be flexible to create a system that works for everyone involved.

Additional resources

For more information on planning groups, see http://od.tamu.edu.

The planning group checklists in the Appendix can help you determine the structure of planning groups needed for your county, based on the identified issues and the base programs in the county. It can also be used during conferences with the regional Extension team to develop expectations for planning at the local level.
A leadership advisory board is an essential component in every Extension program area. Having the right people involved with leadership advisory boards is vital. Our work deserves to be planned and championed by community leaders who believe in it and are fully engaged in the process.

Leadership advisory boards have two primary functions:

▶ **Vision**: Helping identify the most critical issues in the county, ensuring program relevance
▶ **Advocacy**: Serving as spokespeople for Texas AgriLife Extension in the community and with stakeholders

The importance of these functions makes it imperative that we recruit highly qualified people to serve on the board and train them well.

**Recruitment**

A leadership advisory board is composed of 10 to 20 volunteer leaders, each serving a 3-year term. Members should rotate off in staggered terms so that roughly one-third of the board is replaced each year. The leadership advisory board members need not be members of other Extension planning groups.

Finding excellent members is central to the board’s success. They should be respected opinion leaders who understand the important community issues and can influence other local leaders and elected officials. Examples:

▶ Local business leaders
▶ Civic organization leaders
▶ Elected or appointed officials
▶ Members of other nonprofit or governmental boards
▶ Religious leaders
▶ School administrators and/or teachers
▶ Mass media representatives
▶ Other local leaders

Current leadership advisory board members can recommend and help recruit possible replacements. Commissioners court members can also identify potential recruits from their precincts. One successful agent summarizes it this way:

“Members on my [leadership advisory board] are qualified to serve due to their experience on substantive issues, respect given to them by professionals in the field, or their organizational, negotiation, or communication skills; are dependable; are able to accept responsibility; work well with others; and can abide by the decision of the majority.”

Every community has these leaders. Do not let their heavy involvement in other organizations deter you from recruiting them. Busy people often make the best board members because they are likely to be in touch with the community. Show them that Extension provides a valuable service to the community and that their membership on the board can benefit both them and the community.
Training

Leadership advisory board members must be trained if they are to be effective and their talents fully utilized. Board members who are new or not thoroughly trained should be fully oriented to Extension. Don’t assume that they understand the agency and its mission. Give them the following information about Extension:

- History, purpose, and mandates
- Funding sources
- Relationship to the county and to The Texas A&M University System
- Current programs and their development
- The basics of the program development model—how we do what we do
- Role of the board in identifying issues and planning programs
- Role of board members as advocates to help tell Extension’s story

In addition to the orientation, the leadership advisory board should receive training and updates during regular meetings throughout the year. Examples:

- Leadership development training
- Local economic development updates
- Insights from local or state elected officials
- Reports from school officials or other youth organizations

This ongoing training not only keeps the board updated on trends and issues important to the county, but it could also benefit the members personally or professionally. A member who finds the meetings beneficial will stay more engaged with Extension, creating a stronger board overall.

Summary

A leadership advisory board will strengthen county programs if it is staffed well, oriented fully, and trained regularly. The members will become Extension’s strongest advocates in the community, and recruitment will take care of itself. When opinion leaders see other opinion leaders participating in Extension programs, it becomes easier to get the next generation involved.

An agent must expend much time, effort, and creativity to create a successful and self-sustaining system. But once it is established, local programs and advocacy will flourish.
Recruiting and training planning group members

Planning groups—such as program area committees, task forces, coalitions, and 4-H youth advisory boards—deserve to be trained and oriented as well as are leadership advisory boards. Because the planning groups differ somewhat from leadership advisory boards, the training also will differ.

The primary functions of a planning group are reflected in the four phases of program development: plan, design, implement, and measure. The responsibilities of a committee, task force, or coalition are to assist the agent in all phases of planning, delivering, evaluating, and interpreting an educational program.

Recruitment

Like leadership advisory boards, planning groups should consist of opinion leaders, but in a narrower field. The members must have an interest in the subject and should be respected in that field. For example, a member of the diabetes coalition should have expertise in managing diabetes and be recognized for this knowledge. Similarly, a member of the row crop program area committee should be viewed by other local producers as respected, successful, and forward thinking.

The right people must be recruited to serve on these groups if the program is to be effective. Because good members attract good members, you should pay attention to the opinions and suggestions of the current board. Ask other community leaders for suggestions. Invite county commissioners to suggest people to represent their precincts on a committee.

The definitions of planning groups offer some guidelines on the type of members to recruit:

▶ A task force or coalition member is usually a professional in the subject that the group is addressing.
▶ A program area committee member will have a slightly broader view of the subject and be willing to serve for a longer period.

Training

Planning group members must fully understand Extension and its mission. Provide a job description and a comprehensive orientation for members who are new or are not adequately trained. Make sure that they understand these aspects of Extension:

▶ History, purpose, and mandates
▶ Funding sources
▶ Relationship to the county and to The Texas A&M University System
▶ Current programs and their development
▶ The basics of the program development model—how we do what we do
▶ Role of the committee in identifying issues and planning programs to address them
▶ Role of the committee members as advocates to help tell Extension’s story

To be effective, a planning group should receive training and updates throughout the year. Keep them abreast of:

▶ Subject matter updates
▶ Industry trends
New or emerging technologies in the field
Leadership advancement

Enlist other experts to help address these topics. An Extension specialist in that subject could speak at the meeting, either in person or via technology such as Centra, TTVN, or a teleconference. These opportunities enable the specialist to communicate effectively with your group and stay involved in your county program.

Other possible training partners include local lenders, industry leaders, or industry representatives such as a salesperson from a company in that field. Make sure that the presentation focuses on the subject matter and does not become a sales pitch. Most industry professionals will be happy to provide training in exchange for an opportunity to become better acquainted with these opinion leaders.

Summary

The investment of time and energy into recruitment and training of planning group members will return large dividends to you and your program. These groups will participate more in all aspects of program development and will help your programs succeed. An engaged planning group will have these characteristics:

- Ownership in your programs
- Involvement in the group’s activities
- Willingness to advocate without being asked to do so
- Willingness to serve at a meeting if the agent cannot attend

For more resources on planning groups, see http://od.tamu.edu.
Extension is unique in its involvement of local clientele to help chart the course of its educational programs. To remain relevant, we must involve local leaders in identifying and prioritizing the community’s critical issues.

Although long-term strategic visioning is a core responsibility of the leadership advisory board, other people must also be involved in identifying county needs. The board will remain the catalyst in whatever options are selected. The Extension process for identifying issues is outlined below.

**Option I: Issue identification forum**

At an issue identification forum, local leaders help identify and prioritize issues to be addressed by the county Extension program’s educational programs. The process should involve a diverse and representative group of people but focus on Extension’s historically core areas.

The group should include leadership advisory board members along with people selected and recruited by the board who represent:

- Different locations in the county
- Local school districts
- Major industries in the county, commodity groups, agriculture producers, and business leaders
- Chambers of commerce
- Local and county government
- Social services groups
- Medical professionals
- Grassroots organizations
- Local civic groups
- Other key leaders/stakeholders in the community
- Young people (possibly youth board members)

**The process**

1. The leadership advisory board chairperson opens the forum by stressing the importance of the process and its focus on issues that can be addressed by education within Extension’s mission.
2. The participants are divided into subject-area groups based on their major area of professional or personal interest. At least four groups should be formed, with 6 to 10 members in each group, to identify issues.

A leadership advisory board member leads each group. These groups are recommended:

   a. **Agriculture and natural resources**: 8 to 10 people (if needed because of production diversity, more than one agriculture group could be formed to focus on commodity areas such as crops and livestock or horticulture; additional people would be needed to serve on these committees)
   
   b. **Families and health**: 8 to 10 people (if the issues are diverse, additional groups dedicated to specific family and consumer science areas might be needed)
3. A brainstorming session is conducted to identify potential issues. A member of the leadership advisory board posts the suggestions on flip chart paper or by other means within each small group.

4. Issues are combined where applicable, and then ranked through a voting and prioritization process in which each participant receives 10 votes to select the top three to six issues that Extension should address in the coming 4 years.

5. A general session allows each small group to report the issues it identified and prioritized. The report is for informational purposes; the issues will not be reprioritized.

The number of people participating will vary, depending on the size and complexity of the county and its issues. Counties with small populations may have about 25 to 30 members; urban counties may need more groups and/or people in each group. For example, agriculture and natural resources (or health and families) could split into two groups.

The participants should be diverse in ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic level, and should be representative of the potential audiences for Extension educational programs. Be sure to include underserved audiences in this process, as their issues are often overlooked.

All participants should be fully briefed on current Extension programs and should understand the types of issues that Extension can address. Ask them to come prepared with at least three issues that are important to the community and that can be addressed through educational programming.

An online survey can be offered to allow nonattendees to submit issues; however, such a survey is optional if a forum is held. Although these additional issues will be secondary to those identified during the open forum, they will be given to the leadership advisory board for its consideration before the final prioritization of issues.

Option II: LAB issue identification meeting

One method for identifying issues involves only members of the leadership advisory board. Board members evaluate current programs for relevancy, then identify any additional issues that need to be addressed.

Involving the leadership advisory board exclusively works only if the board consists of active community members who are not necessarily wedded to programs implemented in the past. To address this concern, a slightly modified process to increase the number of participants identifying issues is outlined below.

Another option for increased involvement is to include members of the youth board in this meeting. If they are included, prepare them as you would the leadership advisory board, and ask them to discuss with their friends the issues that are important to youth in the county.

The modified process

The leadership advisory board meets to discuss issue identification exclusively. Youth board members could be asked to identify issues important to young people.

1. At least 1 month before the meeting, detailed instructions about plans for the meeting are sent to both boards; they are asked to prepare to discuss three to five critical issues that can be addressed through education.

2. Before the meeting, members of both boards visit with their colleagues, friends, and other community leaders to gain a broad perspective. The leadership advisory board could also gather and prioritize information using a supplemental survey (outlined on page 15). The online survey is required if Option II is used.

3. A process similar to that in Option I could be used to combine and prioritize the issues that surface. Members of the leadership advisory board develop a list of issues in all four program areas. Through discussion and/or votes, they create a prioritized list and delegate the program
efforts to the planning groups, such as program area committees, task forces, and the youth board.

**Supplemental data collection: needs-assessment survey**

A common method to collect data on community issues is a needs-assessment survey. This method involves participants beyond the LAB and gives them time to think about their responses and a means to submit them anonymously.

Because most people today have access to technology, an electronic survey could be used. It could be targeted to community leaders only or opened for input from the entire community.

**The supplemental process**

The Organizational Development unit will develop an online survey for counties to use. You can send the survey link to identified leaders or publicize it broadly. Be sure to involve young people in this process.

Respondents will be asked to identify issues that are important to the county, that can be addressed through educational programs, and that focus on Extension’s four major program areas. Once the data have been collected, the results should be discussed in a leadership advisory board meeting in late fall or in the spring to determine each issue’s priority for planning group action.

Use this option as a supplement to the two options listed above and not as a stand-alone process for needs assessment. For more details about the process, see [http://extensionissues.tamu.edu](http://extensionissues.tamu.edu).

**Conclusion**

Several methods can be used to identify issues to guide Extension in long-term strategic planning. For the methods outlined in this document to be effective, we must engage the leadership advisory board in the process.

A successful needs-assessment process must be diligent and involve people who represent the target clientele. Needs assessment is the first step in the Texas AgriLife Extension’s program model. If it is not executed properly, it will be difficult to produce an excellent program or good results. The issue identification process helps Extension remain relevant.

As issues are identified, county staff members must work with regional Extension leaders to determine the most effective program planning structure to address them. For a long-term issue, the county might need a new program area committee; for short-term problems, a task force may suffice. Or, the leadership advisory board could delegate the issue to a current committee or task force for appropriate program efforts.
Once the issues have been compiled, the next step is to ensure that they are relevant, important, and worth the use of taxpayer dollars to address them. Because money, time, and other resources are limited, we must tackle issues that are of the highest priority and that fit within the scope of our program areas.

**How does this relate to Extension program development?**

Extension must demonstrate its relevance from the local level to the federal level. Describe the issue fully, using data to provide support the need to address it. Don’t rely on your feelings or personal perceptions to justify working on it.

You will return to this section at the end of the program development process when you communicate the results of the actions taken. This information will help demonstrate the program’s relevance. Gathering this data at the beginning of the program will save time at the end.

**Apply it!**

Describe the issue and justify working on it. Using the questions below as a guide, gather data and support it with client statements or other qualitative information.

**Scope/severity**
- Why is the issue a problem?
- How severe is it?
- Who does it affect?

**Costs**
- What are the total costs associated with the problem?
- What kind of costs does the problem create—economic, social, or environmental?

**Implications/benefits**
- What will happen if the issue is left unresolved?
- If the problem is solved, what individual and public benefits might be expected?

**Previous efforts**
Describe three to five examples of previous efforts to solve this problem, answering the following questions:
- What was the purpose of the effort?
- Who was its target audience?
- What were its goals and objectives?
- What educational strategy was used to address the problem?
- What were the results of the effort?

**Purpose**
- What is the purpose of the proposed educational program?

**Finally**

This is the beginning of your effort to improve the quality of life for your clients. Start telling your story. Support it with data but don’t overdo it. Be creative yet objective.
An important step in the program development process is to identify the target audience. If the audience is not established properly, the educational effort will have limited success. Identifying the audience can help narrow the program’s educational content and focus your marketing efforts.

**How does this relate to Extension program development?**

Before you can develop a program, you need to know who your audience is. Different audiences may need different approaches or levels of information on a particular subject or issue. Choose a primary target audience—the people you are trying to impact directly. Then build the program for them.

The program can also benefit groups that are not targeted directly. These groups are called secondary target audiences. An example is a 4-H program. When young people are the primary audience, their parents often become a secondary audience.

**Apply it!**

To determine your target audience, answer these questions:

- Who is affected by this problem or issue? What different audiences need to be addressed?
- Do they have or are they perceived to have the problem?
- Who are the primary and secondary audiences?
- Can an educational program help this audience?

Once you have pinpointed the target audience, learn as much as possible about it. This information can help you develop goals, content, and methods that will make the program a success. The questions below can help you describe your target audience.

- What are the specific characteristics of the audience, such as age, attitudes, ethnicities, knowledge, skills, population size, and educational level?
- How many members of the target audience can be reached with an educational program?
- What skills or strengths does this target audience have that educational programming can develop and or enhance?
- What social, cultural, economic, or environmental aspects of the problem and target audiences should change?

**Finally**

Take this step seriously. If the target audience is well defined, your program will be more likely to succeed.
Begin with the end in mind. Intended outcomes are the changes you expect the program to bring about. To determine the type and amount of changes to aim for, consider these client characteristics:

- Needs
- Current knowledge
- Limitations
- Other factors gleaned from the audience identification stage

There are six types of client change—knowledge, skills, attitudes/belief, behavior, best practices, and new technology. They can be organized under two categories: learning and application.

**Apply it**

**Learning** occurs when a person becomes able to respond differently to a task or an environmental pressure because of an educational experience. Learning is typically a short-term goal and includes changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes/belief:

- **Knowledge** is learned information; it involves varying levels of comprehension.
- **Skills** refer to a person’s mental and physical abilities to use new or alternative processes.
- **Attitudes/beliefs** are a person’s positions, opinions, feelings, and perspectives.

**Application** involves long-term changes in a person’s actions because of an educational experience. The three levels of application are behavior change, best practice adoption, and new technology adoption.

- **Behavior change** can be defined as alterations in participant actions. This type of change usually occurs after something is learned. For example, a person who has developed a skill may change his or her behavior.

- **Best practice adoption** occurs when a participant chooses a new practice over a previous one.

- **New technology adoption** is the acceptance and use of innovations instead of previous methods.

The length of an educational program affects the types of outcomes that can be expected. A short-term program with limited clientele contact will likely have an intended outcome from the Learning group. A longer term program with several sessions will be more likely to achieve the more advanced client changes from the Application group.

Although short-term, intensive programs can change behavior or convince participants to adopt new practices, their results are more difficult to determine immediately. Application is best measured after the participants have weighed all the options and decided that the recommended practice or behavior is beneficial.

Similarly, longer term programs may aim to achieve application, but they will most often have an intermediate or short-term goal of learning. To change a behavior or practice, most participants must become aware of the benefits, learn how to make the change, and change an attitude or belief. The evaluation strategy for these types of programs will be more long term, measuring some short-term client change early on, and following up later to determine whether the new knowledge or skill level was applied.

**Finally**

To determine the desired outcomes, you must understand the target audience’s current knowledge, beliefs, practices, and behaviors. Your educational program is more likely to succeed if you specify the outcomes you want to achieve before you develop content, activities, and teaching methods.
A design is the outline of an educational program from beginning to end. In this context, a program refers to multiple learning experiences over time—educational events and resources presented and conducted in a purposeful, sequential manner and intended to produce a change in the target audience.

To design an educational program, determine what needs to be taught, develop the content, and decide how to deliver it efficiently and effectively. Consider these factors:

- The subject matter and associated issue(s)
- Desired program outcomes
- The target audience, including its previous knowledge, experience, and attitudes
- Sequential learning opportunities organized to build on previous knowledge
- Various methods to accommodate all learning styles
- The amount of time available to conduct the entire program
- Resources available, such as facilities, materials, money, and people
- Volunteer opportunities

Often, county Extension agents fail to consider the many factors that affect learning and rate of adoption. People learn about a subject by building on previous information. Because people learn best through multiple learning experiences, educators must use more than one teaching method.

Design the program to cover the material over an extended period, allowing for the target audience members to build on their knowledge and change their behavior through a strategic process.

**Delivery methods**

Each person has a different learning style and responds best to particular delivery methods. To accommodate as many people as possible, use a variety of individual and group methods and take into account possible cultural barriers.

Several delivery methods can be effective:

- Workshops, in person or online
- Tours
- Short courses, in person or online
- Lectures, in person or online
- One-on-one teaching/correspondence, in person or online
- Telephone answer lines
- Online interactive programs
- Websites and other electronic media
- Field days
- Seminars, in person or online
- Role playing
- Method demonstrations, in person or online
- Panel of experts
- Newsletters, print or electronic
- Websites
- Social media

**Finally**

“What a man hears, he may doubt; what he sees, he may possibly doubt; but what he does himself, he cannot doubt.” These words were spoken by Seaman Knapp, the father of cooperative Extension. Although spoken about 100 years ago, these words are as relevant today as ever. Although issues, problems, technologies, and opportunities change, real learning and true impacts are achieved when engaged learners have a vested interest in the topic at hand and many delivery methods are used to reach them.
Decreasing budgets and rising demand have increased the need for AgriLife Extension faculty, staff, and volunteers to create new revenue streams from the agency’s educational activities and programs.

The driving force behind our programs will always be the mission of AgriLife Extension and the needs of each community, not the opportunity to create revenue. However, a fee-based program will be appropriate where the mission and local needs align with the chance to recover some or all of the costs of an educational activity.

Research shows that people who believe they will get a significant economic or social benefit from a program have a high “willingness to pay” for it (Budak, et al 2010). Cost recovery for programs offers benefits for participants and the agency:

▶ Participants who pay for an educational program feel more vested in, and in control of, the learning process than those who do not pay (Merriam, et al 2007).
▶ Fees attach value to Extension products and services and provide legitimacy and a measuring stick for demand (West, et al. 2009).
▶ The income generated enables the agency to continue offering educational opportunities and to maintain staffing levels and the statewide network in times of diminishing resources.

Many of Extension’s programs are targeted to audiences who can afford to pay user fees and who benefit from their participation. Such programs can be included in a cost-recovery strategy. Programs that may not be appropriate for cost recovery include those targeted to audiences with limited ability to pay and those that have a high value to the community, county, or state.

Cost recovery is not a new concept for AgriLife Extension; in 2011, 27 percent of the agency’s resources came from contracts, grants, and user fees.

Apply it

Cost recovery is becoming an integral part of AgriLife Extension’s excellence model. It will not dictate the direction of a program, but it will be considered for most educational programs.

The programs for which fees will be applicable are those that support AgriLife Extension’s mission, promote public good and individual advancement, and address critical issues identified by clientele groups. District Extension administrators, regional program directors, and Extension specialists will work with faculty to determine whether or not an activity should assess a cost-recovery fee.

County Extension agents and specialists may confer with each other, their supervisors, and their regional program directors to determine whether an activity warrants a registration fee. Cost recovery is probably not appropriate for programs that are directly supported by federal funds, such as Better Living for Texans, or
those specifically targeted to a limited resource or at-risk audiences. Most other activities will be expected to recover at least some costs.

Consider these questions when determining whether cost recovery is appropriate for a particular program:

▶ Does the targeted audience have the potential to benefit economically?
▶ Will the participants receive certification or continuing education credits?
▶ Is the subject matter advanced?
▶ Will Extension staff spend much time to plan, implement, and evaluate the program?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, work with your district administrator or regional program director to determine the appropriate fee structure for the program. If a user fee will hinder program accessibility and participation, discuss the potential issues with administrators and ask for guidance on whether to recover costs.

Involve the appropriate planning group in the decisions on cost recovery. Inform program area committees, task forces, coalitions, youth boards, and leadership advisory boards about AgriLife Extension’s expectations and guidelines for cost recovery.

When communicating with planning groups, reinforce the positive aspects of cost recovery. Planning groups are ambassadors for Extension, and their attitudes toward cost recovery can influence those of other clients and stakeholders. They are more likely to support Extension if we communicate openly and honestly about the need to recover costs from some programs, the criteria used to determine those fees, and the benefits of these efforts.

Finally

Cost recovery is one of several revenue-enhancing strategies that will enable AgriLife Extension programs to grow and provide unbiased educational information to more Texans. Cost recovery is consistent with AgriLife Extension’s mission and enables the agency to continue serving clients who rely on research-based information and programs.

For specific steps and guidelines, visit http://extension costrecovery.tamu.edu.
Educational methods

How does your target audience learn best? Do they learn best by seeing (visual learners), hearing (auditory learners) or doing (kinesthetic learners)? After the audience and content have been determined, choose the appropriate methods to educate the target audience.

How do you like to learn? Although you won’t choose your methods based on this perspective only, remember that just as you don’t like to learn in certain ways, other people feel the same way. Because people have different preferred learning styles, the key to helping people learn is to use a variety of teaching methods.

How does this relate to Extension program development?

Extension faculty must use creativity, imagination, and variety in determining the best content-delivery methods for specific intended outcomes (Table 1).

Table 1. Typical Extension methods and the intended outcomes for which they are best suited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery method</th>
<th>Knowledge acquired</th>
<th>Attitudes changed</th>
<th>Skill developed</th>
<th>Practice adopted/ behavior changed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture/seminar</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short course</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field day</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result demonstration</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method demonstration</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role playing</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-on-one instruction</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletters</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role modeling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web resources</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apply it!

Answer these questions to determine the methods to use:

- **Delivery methods:** What program delivery methods can best address this problem with the intended audience? Refer to the examples cited in the research section and describe how you can use successful methods from other projects.

- **Timing:** How long will educational activities last? What timing factors need to be considered? Will activities be held once a week for 10 weeks? Or meet only once a year? Is the time frame sufficient to measure the objectives efficiently?

- **Presenters:** Who will deliver the program—subject-matter specialists, teachers, prominent community figures, people who have learned through experience, and/or other experts? Will you use technology?

- **Resources:** What resources will be needed? Are needed materials already available? If materials are not available, who will develop them?

Finally

Use a variety of teaching methods. Some methods will work for some people and not others. As a learner, you probably don’t like to learn by just one method.

During an event, you might use only one teaching method or a combination of methods. Because an Extension program comprises multiple educational events over time, you will have opportunities to deliver educational information in a variety of formats. Develop a timeline for your program, and alternate the type of events to provide variety and maintain interest.
Learning styles

Learning occurs when a person absorbs new information or acquires new skills. Everyone has preferred methods of receiving information, or learning styles. There are three primary learning styles: visual, auditory, and tactile/kinesthetic.

Visual learners need to see the educator and his or her expressions to fully understand the content. They tend to sit at the front of the room to avoid distractions and obstructions. They typically think in images and learn best from visuals such as diagrams, illustrated textbooks, videos, flipcharts, and handouts. During a lesson, visual learners often take detailed notes.

Auditory learners learn best by listening to lectures, participating in discussion groups, and talking things through. Auditory learners notice pitch, tone of voice, and speed of delivery. Written information has less meaning if it is not reinforced by lecture. These learners often benefit from reading aloud and using a recorder. They seldom read newspapers and tend to get their news from television, radio, or the Web.

Tactile/kinesthetic learners prefer a hands-on approach, actively exploring the things around them. It can be difficult for them to sit still for long periods, and they may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration. They like hands-on activities such as science lab experiments and field trips where they experience education actively.

How does this relate to Extension program development?

When possible, use several teaching methods that accommodate all three of these learning styles. The audience will be more engaged in the learning process and more satisfied with the program.

Apply it!

Examine your outcome program plans. Do they incorporate teaching methods directed toward each of the learning styles? Use Table 2 to make sure that your strategy is complete. This is not an exhaustive list, and not all methods will be appropriate for every outcome program plan. However, make sure you do not cater to only one learning style.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Auditory</th>
<th>Tactile/kinesthetic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Result demonstration</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method demonstration</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Short course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart/poster</td>
<td>Panel of experts</td>
<td>Interactive online training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs/slides</td>
<td>Telephone answer line</td>
<td>Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>Farm/home visit</td>
<td>Participation in result demonstration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour/field day</td>
<td>Discussion group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Voice-over online training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact sheet/publication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most Extension agents and specialists have been educated well on specific subject matter, but many have received little or no training on how to teach. As a result, Extension professionals may worry that they are not effective teachers.

Although some people do have natural teaching talents, everyone can develop effective teaching skills. In fact, even experienced educators can improve their teaching skills. This section contains an overview of how learners acquire information and how educators can facilitate learning.

Two specific tools can help you improve your teaching skills: Bloom’s taxonomy of learning, and Rosenshine and Furst’s characteristics of an effective educator.

**Bloom’s taxonomy of learning**

Benjamin Bloom was an American educational psychologist who classified intellectual behavior and studied the stages of the learning process. Bloom’s taxonomy classifies learning objectives from simple to complex. The goal is to enable educators to help their students achieve higher levels of learning.

The six levels of Bloom’s taxonomy are listed below, along with example actions for each level.

1. **Knowledge**: Define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, recall, repeat, state
2. **Comprehension**: Classify, describe, discuss, explain, locate, paraphrase, restate, translate
3. **Application**: Apply, choose, demonstrate, illustrate, interpret, practice, sketch, solve, use
4. **Analysis**: Analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment
5. **Synthesis**: Arrange, collect, compose, create, design, formulate, organize, plan, propose
6. **Evaluation**: Appraise, argue, assess, choose, compare, defend, evaluate, judge, predict

The taxonomy can help you move the target audience through the subject matter and help them achieve higher levels of learning and critical thinking. Choose the level that you want the audience to achieve, and create activities that bring them to that level. Remember: Levels of learning range from simple to complex, each level building on the previous ones.

By incorporating learning opportunities for all the senses—seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting—you can create a potentially high-impact educational program.
Characteristics of an effective educator

According to research (Rosenshine and Furst 1973), the five most important variables affecting teacher effectiveness are clarity, variability, enthusiasm, task-oriented and/or businesslike behaviors, and student opportunity to learn. These variables are described below, based on the writings of Rosenshine and Furst (1973) and Bulger, Mohr, and Walls (2002).

Clarity

In the context of teaching, clarity is the ability to present information in an understandable manner. Teachers can make their lessons clearer by preparing, outlining, and making notes for course materials.

Clearly outline what you want the target audience to learn or accomplish through the program. This task is known as objective or goal writing. These objectives and goals should direct your preparation, delivery, and assessment.

Keep in mind that teachers usually know more about the subject material than the target audience does. One of the biggest mistakes novice educators make is not teaching to the student’s level. Make sure the material is clear and makes sense to the participants.

Variability

Variability is the use of many delivery methods to teach the material. Use a variety of methods, media, and activities to keep the participants engaged and to make sure that those with different learning styles are being served.

Enthusiasm

A teacher’s enthusiasm can help participants become excited about what they are learning. Show interest in the material and make an effort to add excitement and relevance. Speak expressively, move around the room, and vary your facial expressions.

Task-oriented and/or businesslike behaviors

Students and program participants want an instructor who takes teaching seriously. You shouldn’t be boring, but you do need to be responsible, steady, systematic, and poised. Encourage your students to try to understand the material. Also be prepared, arrive early for meetings, use an agenda, and conduct the program efficiently.

Student opportunity to learn

Audience members need to engage with the material. Initiate a discussion; pause to allow them time to digest what they have heard; and conduct activities that encourage the participants to reflect and expand on the topic. These actions reinforce the material and help the learners retain the information.

Teaching effectiveness—a lifelong pursuit

This introduction to teaching effectiveness covers only two of the many tools that you can use to become a more effective educator. You’ll also need persistence, patience, and practice. Keep improving your teaching skills, and embrace the goal of becoming a stellar educator.
Evaluating Extension educational programs

Evaluation is broadly defined as the process of gathering information about a program in order to measure its impacts and to improve future programs. Evaluation involves:

▶ Conducting an evaluation soon after the program ends to measure its immediate impact
▶ Reporting the results to stakeholders
▶ Evaluating the program months or years later to measure longer term impacts including, if possible, economic benefits

Evaluation is conducted throughout the program development model, but it is most prominent in Phase 4, Measure.

**Programs to evaluate**

Consult with your regional program director and district Extension administrator about which programs to evaluate. Several factors may dictate the choice of programs and method of evaluation:

▶ Whether your county is required to report customer satisfaction data
▶ Whether a specialist has developed a ready-to-use, standard instrument for the program
▶ Whether the regional program director suggests that you gather certain regional indicators of impact

Some agents evaluate all their programs; others evaluate just a subset, such as major outcomes programs.

**Data collection methods**

Common methods of collecting evaluation data include scan forms, agent-created surveys, audience response systems, and Web surveys (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Scan form</th>
<th>Web survey</th>
<th>Agent-created non-scan survey</th>
<th>Audience response systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree of customization possible for specific needs</td>
<td>None or some</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use for immediate measure</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Usually no</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use for longer term measure</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Choose the method according to the degree of customization you need and the technology that best fits your audience. (Table 4).

If you use scan forms, the Organizational Development unit can perform most of the steps in the process—including data entry and analysis—for you. The results usually are returned to you within a few weeks.

For Web surveys, the respondents themselves enter the data as they complete the survey. Most web survey software has built-in tools that you can use to generate frequency tables and means.

For audience response systems, the participants themselves enter the data using devices called clickers. The software tabulates the results instantly. This relatively new technology is becoming more popular but still has very limited availability.

Only if you develop your own non-scannable form do you both enter and analyze your own data. Although extra work for you, this option gives you total flexibility in tailoring the instrument exactly to your needs.

### Evaluation to measure immediate impacts

Measuring immediate impacts most often involves looking for evidence of client changes associated with Learning outcomes—knowledge gained, skills acquired, or attitude changes—and the participants’ intentions to adopt new best management practices or technologies. Occasionally it involves looking for evidence of actual adoption, if the program was conducted over an extended period and enough time has passed that adoption is a possibility.

### Methods of measuring immediate impacts

The best methods for measuring immediate impacts are scanning forms, agent-created surveys, and audience response systems. Although in most cases Web surveys are not well suited for measuring immediate impact, they may be appropriate if all the participants...
have online access and the response rate is not significantly lower than for paper surveys at the end of a program.

**Evaluating for results**

To determine immediate impacts, you must gather data from program participants, observation, records, and other sources. Then the data must be tabulated, analyzed, and used to answer basic questions about the program.

If you’re using scan forms, the analysis will be provided for you. If you’re using your own survey form, you’ll analyze the data yourself. Enter the data in Microsoft Excel and run a basic analysis. This may be all you need to do to answer basic questions about your program.

An analysis tool called EZAnalyze is available as an Excel add-in to run basic analysis. It’s free for educators and easy to use.

Suggested tasks to complete once your data are entered include:

- Run frequency tables on all variables.
- Run descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, on any variables on ordinal or interval level data such as on scales, age, dollar amounts, acres, and number of livestock. Basically, run descriptive statistics on any variable that needs an average or total.

**Frequency tables**

- If you have relatively few missing values (10 percent or less) then use valid percent, which excludes missing values, rather than percent, which includes missing values. If more than 10 percent is missing, use percent and report missing.
- On retrospective post (before vs. after) scales for change in understanding, compare Before with After on the combined percentage of Good and Excellent added together.

**Means**

- On retrospective post (Before vs. After) scales, compare Before with After by calculating percent change on the means, using the following formula:
  
  \[
  \text{Percent Change} = \left( \frac{\text{After mean} - \text{Before mean}}{\text{Before mean}} \right) \times 100.
  \]

**Evaluation for program improvement**

You can also evaluate programs to make them more effective. This involves using an evaluation to reveal aspects of the program that have been particularly effective or helpful, and those that are not working well.

A survey can garner information for program improvement using closed-ended questions—such as Select one only and Select all that apply—and open-ended questions or comments.

Open-ended questions can elicit many suggestions for program improvement. They allow participants to offer insights, suggestions, and feedback. Consider using these generic, open-ended questions for program improvements:

- What did you like most about the program?
- What did you like least about the program?
- What information was not covered sufficiently to answer your questions?
What topics were not included in the program but should be?

What are your suggestions for improving this program?

The responses to closed-ended questions can also be used to improve a program. First, look at results for individual survey items:

- Individual survey items consistently rated poorly may have content that is not being understood. Consider devoting more time to the topic and/or finding another way to present it.
- If the pre- and post-tests of knowledge reveal little change in scores, the content may be too easy or too difficult, or the questions could be too easy or too difficult. Further exploration will be needed.
- Run results by background variables to see if the performance varied by groups. For example, older participants might not rate the program as highly as do younger participants. You may need to adjust the program or teaching style for different groups.

Evaluation to measure longer term impacts

To measure longer term impacts, look for evidence of a client change associated with Application outcomes—behavior change, adoption of new technology, and/or adoption of best practice—after the program concludes and enough time has passed for application outcomes to have occurred (6 months, 12 months, etc.). Also determine whether the participants have realized any economic benefit. To gather high-quality longer term data, you must maintain a complete and up-to-date program participant list.

Methods for measuring longer term impacts

The options available for measuring longer term impacts (Table 3) are scan forms and agent-created paper surveys, both of which can be mailed. Web surveys are appropriate if you have valid email addresses for all participants.

Evaluating for results

The same techniques and tools for measuring immediate impacts can be used for measuring longer term impacts.

Evaluating for program improvement

To collect ideas on how to improve the program, include a few questions that let participants consider, in retrospect, what was omitted or covered insufficiently that would have made the program more effective or productive.

Additional resources

For more information on evaluation, including a library of scan forms, see http://od.tamu.edu/evaluation.
Interpretation of results and accountability

Extension educators take care to plan, design, implement, and measure their programs, but they sometimes spend little effort to properly share the results. Results are important because they demonstrate:

▶ **Accountability:** Extension uses tax dollars wisely.
▶ **Success:** Program goals were met.
▶ **Justification:** Programs are worth the resources used to create and implement them.

If we do not demonstrate that our county and state programs are worthwhile, stakeholders will not fund them.

**How do we measure accountability?**

Extension holds its programs and people accountable by administering evaluations properly and ethically. You can evaluate and not be accountable, but you cannot be accountable without evaluating.

No specific type of evaluation is always best. Choose the type of evaluation according to the type of program and the type information desired.

The final steps in conducting an excellent evaluation are to develop a summary document and to share it with appropriate stakeholders.

**Outcome summary**

An outcome summary tells your program’s story to stakeholders such as county commissioners, donors, legislators, and clientele. It is required for all major Extension programs each year.

Outcome summaries should be concise, clear, professional, and attractive. Each should include the necessary information but be no more than 2 pages long. When developing outcome summaries for your programs, keep in mind these key points:

**Follow the “three R’s” of reporting results.**

▶ **Relevance:** The reason the educational program was implemented
  – Importance of the issue to the organization, community, or state (including financial figures, number of people affected)
  – Role of education in addressing the issue
  – Location of identified issue
  – Target audience
▶ **Response:** Information on program delivery
  – Description of the program
  – Demographics of the participants
  – Educational content and methods of delivery
  – Level of participation
▶ **Results:** Information on program results, the most important part of the document
- Changes that occurred because of the program, such as in knowledge, attitudes, or behavior
- Individual and public benefits, including improved quality of life and economics
- Results listed in the following order:
  1. Adoption of practices or changes in behavior
  2. Knowledge gained
  3. Customer satisfaction

Include a summary sentence or two to reemphasize the most important client change measured as a result of the program.

**Conclude with two short sections that finish the story.**

- **Next steps:** Plans to expand or continue the educational program
- **Acknowledgments:** Credit to program area committees, Extension faculty, sponsors, commissioners courts, and others who contributed to the program

**Use the proper format and design.**

- 2 pages maximum
- Format supplied by your supervisor and regional program director
- No more than two or three photographs for readability and attractiveness
- Limited use of program logos
- Use of appropriate reporting methods and strategies
- Methods that work best for each target group, including clientele and stakeholders
- Multiple methods

- Specific information, such as satisfaction, knowledge gained, and attitude changes, targeted to specific groups

Popular reporting methods include written communication such as reports, brochures, fliers, and posters; oral presentations or word of mouth; and electronic communication, such as Web pages, blogs, email, CD-roms, video, TV/radio, and smartphones.

**Conclusion**

An outcome summary should not be just an internal document shared with your supervisors and put on a shelf. We must also keep stakeholders informed of the results of programs. Even the most effective programs may not receive continued funding if their results are not shared with those who need to know.
Stakeholders need to know whether our programs are improving our communities. After developing, delivering, and evaluating educational programs, we must determine who the stakeholders are and explain the results to them. Below is a partial list of stakeholders in a typical county:

**Internal groups**

- **Coworkers**: This is the most often overlooked audience for program results. Does everyone in your office know about your programs? Could each give a 3-minute stump speech about the program’s impacts? If not, you are not communicating those results well enough.

- **Specialists and administrators**: A key to your program’s success is the involvement of subject matter specialists. These specialists want to know the impacts of programs they helped produce. Equally important are the district Extension administrator, county Extension director, regional program director, and state administrators. All your Extension colleagues want to know about the differences county programs are making.

- **Leadership advisory board**: A main function of this board is to advocate for Extension. To do that, they must know the impact that the local program is having. Keep the board informed about all program areas and current educational efforts.

- **Program area committees/planning groups**: These groups must know the results of programs so they can better help in continued planning and improvement. They also can use this information to influence other local leaders through their advocacy efforts.

**External groups**

- **County commissioners court**: Although these people may have a general idea about what Extension does, they may not understand the agency’s real importance and value unless results are shared with them regularly.

- **Other county officials**: Other officials can affect the operation and funding of your office, including the county auditor, county treasurer, county clerk, and human resources officer. Only a little additional effort is needed to make sure that these individuals are kept informed.

- **City officials**: Cities can be partners and sources of funding for specific programs. Make sure that selected city officials and departments know the value of Extension. These officials include city council and mayor, and members of the parks, health and human services, and water departments.

- **State legislative members**: These officials can be Extension’s strongest advocates in Austin. Members of the House and Senate develop the
state budget that provides much of Extension’s funding. In most cases, a House member’s district will have at least one Extension office. Get to know the staff at the district office; they can help you get program results to the legislator.

- **Commodity and industry groups:** Many groups have missions similar to Extension’s. They can be valuable partners in our program efforts. Given timely and results-oriented information, they can be effective spokespeople for Extension.

Other individuals and groups can also influence decision makers. Know who those people are in your county. To fully use their potential as stakeholders, you must understand your county thoroughly and be very visible in the community.

Your visibility will increase program participation and effectiveness and enhance relationships with the local “who’s who.” These people will seek you out if they perceive Extension to be a valuable resource and you to be a community leader. Consider these venues for increasing your visibility in the county:

- **Media:** Local newspapers, radio and television stations, and online media can give you visibility and name recognition.

- **Civic involvement:** Participate in civic clubs, community organizations, school functions, and other groups and events that are important locally. This shows that you have the well-being of the community at heart.

- **Chamber of commerce:** Most chambers have subcommittees that offer opportunities for involvement. You need to build relationships with local businesspeople who are involved in the chamber. These people can become strong advocates for Extension if they know and appreciate the agency’s programs.

- **Other boards and committees:** Serving on boards or committees for other organizations can lead to relationships with local leaders. Not only is this service an opportunity to market Extension, it can also introduce you to potential leadership advisory board or program area committee members.

Creating relationships in the community leads to visibility, which can lead to success. The communication from these relationships helps bring value and credibility.

Do not communicate only during times of budget requests, crises, or need. Instead, communicate continually. Share the results of programs in a timely manner with everyone who should know. You can offer the information again as a reminder at budget time or when advocacy assistance is needed, but it should not be new information to those stakeholders.

If you have communicated with stakeholders regularly, they should have a general understanding about what Extension is, what the agency does, and why it is a sound investment of public dollars.
Developing local leaders

Leadership development is an integral part of the program development process and a unique role for Extension in most counties. In each county program, a core group of local leaders serves on Extension’s advisory boards and program area committees. These people benefit personally and professionally by enhancing their leadership skills, and Extension benefits from their contributions in those advisory roles.

**Leadership development program**

**Tier 1**

A leadership development program is expected to be established in each county and targeted to members of the leadership advisory board, program area committees, and other planning groups. These groups’ meetings should include leadership development topics presented by the county Extension agent or other appropriate resource person. Initial topics should focus on:

- Visioning and identifying issues in the county
- Advocacy—interpreting Extension to key stakeholders, including a complete orientation to Extension

Other topics could prompt improvements in the performance of planning groups and the personal leadership skills of members:

- Strategic planning
- Meeting facilitation
- Public speaking
- Media relations
- Local support/resource development
- Partnership/collaboration development

The process should be ongoing and should be repeated as members are rotated and replaced. The initial phase should include at least all members of the leadership advisory board. As new members are identified and recruited, they can form a new leadership class.

Each year, all new members should receive training on visioning and advocacy. The leadership development program will continue, with each planning group having a short program on a leadership topic as a part of its regular meetings.

The resources for Tier 1 will consist of lessons from the Building Connections: Community Leadership Program and other leadership curricula, the Extension Volunteer Management publication series, and other leadership resources.

**Tier 2**

Leadership development should go beyond membership in planning groups. The leadership advisory board should develop and implement a community leadership program with the following characteristics:

- The curriculum is relevant to local conditions but includes many common threads similar to Tier 1 topics.
- Other topics are local and designed to familiarize the participants with local industry, government, and educational systems.
- A minimum standard is a series of at least six educational sessions, with eight to 12 preferred.
- Local business and industry leaders are identified for participation.
- Past participants serve as resources for future classes and help identify and recruit participants.

The resources for this program include those that were developed for Tier 1 and additional curricula to be developed to support this type of program.

**Conclusion**

Community leadership is needed in many areas of the state, both rural and urban. Extension can provide leadership in addressing this issue. By training Extension volunteers and moving toward Tier 2 of the plan, the agency can help develop a corps of local leaders to address community issues. The training will elicit new ideas and help maintain our agency’s relevance.
Volunteers enable the Texas AgriLife Extension Service to reach more people and more segments of communities than the agency can reach alone. They also ensure that Extension programs are relevant by helping identify and prioritize local issues.

Texas AgriLife Extension relies on volunteers throughout program development, implementation, evaluation, and interpretation. Steady population growth and tightening budgets have heightened the need for volunteer help to meet the increasing demand for relevant, high-quality Extension programs.

Volunteers serve in all Extension’s program areas. The primary volunteer groups include leadership advisory boards, program area committees, master volunteer programs, 4-H and youth development volunteers, youth boards, and task forces.

Texas Extension has more than 100,000 volunteers who donate more than 4 million hours of service each year, at a value of about $84 million. Their volunteer service is the equivalent of 2,000 full-time employees.

These numbers, while amazing, do not tell the whole story. The value and impact of these volunteers are measured not only in numbers, but also in the changed lives of residents. Texans benefit personally from Extension by knowledge gained, leadership skills developed, creativity sparked, hands-on learning experienced, and lives improved. It is impossible to accurately quantify the amount of money that Texans save or earn by using the skills and practices taught by Extension.

Volunteers also are some of Extension’s best advocates. They help interpret Extension’s value and program outcomes to others. These private citizens are a powerful force because: (a) they have credibility in communities as private, tax-paying citizens, and (b) they have an insider’s view and knowledge of Extension activities and the difference the agency makes.

If you do not rely on volunteers and view them as an essential component of your Extension program area, you are not experiencing the true potential of your programs, and you are not fulfilling your role in your county. Take the time to understand the many roles Extension volunteers play by studying this publication and the resources on the Organizational Development website (od.tamu.edu) under the Volunteerism Resources link.
Use the following work sheets as a template for your program planning. They can help you as you plan important steps in the process.

For more information about program development, please contact Jeff Ripley at j-ripley@tamu.edu or 979.845.7280.

Extension’s success depends on how well this process is implemented. The Extension Organizational Development Unit is dedicated to helping you succeed in achieving program excellence.
Determine the planning group structure that would be ideal for these base programs, plus the issues listed on the next page:

**Base youth programs**
- 4-H expansion and management
- 4-H family and consumer sciences projects
- 4-H livestock projects
- Other youth development programs

**Base adult programs**
- Commercial horticulture (if applicable)
- Community/economic development
- Family nutrition
- Financial management
- Home horticulture
- Livestock/forage production
- Parenting
- Row crop production (if applicable)
- Small acreage/new landowners
- Water/natural resource conservation
- Wildlife management

**Discussion questions**
- How well does your current planning group structure fit the needs of these program areas and the issues on the next page?
- What new planning groups might be needed to address the programs?
- Who might be involved with these newly identified groups?
## Planning Group Checklist for Base
Texas AgriLife Extension Service Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program emphasis area</th>
<th>Current planning group</th>
<th>Proposed planning group</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-H expansion and management</td>
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<td>4-H FCS projects</td>
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<td>4-H livestock projects</td>
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<td>Other youth development programs</td>
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<td>Commercial horticulture</td>
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<td>Community/economic development</td>
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<td>Health and wellness</td>
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<td>Home horticulture</td>
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<td>Livestock/forage production</td>
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<td>Parenting</td>
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<td>Row crop production</td>
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<td>Small/new landowner education</td>
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<td>Water/natural resource conservation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildlife management</td>
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### Planning Group Checklist for County-Specific Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Current planning group</th>
<th>Proposed planning group</th>
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Issue Analysis/Description Work Sheet

Issue: ___________________________________________  Issue source: _______________________________________

Describe the issue. ___________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

What problem are you trying to solve? ___________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Who is affected by the issue? ___________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

How severe is the issue? (use data to support) _______________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

What costs (such as economic, social, environmental) are associated with the issue? (use data to support)

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

What could happen if the issue is not addressed? (use data to support) ____________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
What are the benefits of addressing the issue? (use data to support) 

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

What role can education play in addressing the issue?

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

Summary statement: 

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________
Target Audience Analysis Work Sheet

Issue: ____________________________________________________________

Who is affected by this issue? _______________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Who is the primary audience for this effort? ____________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Is there a secondary audience; if so who are they? ______________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

What is the total number of people in this target audience? (use data to support) __________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Where do the target audience members live? __________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

What is the age of the target audience? (include range, mean, etc.) _______
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

What is the education level of the target audience? _______________________
_________________________________________________________________
What is the income level of the target audience? (range and mean) ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

What does the target audience currently know about this issue? (estimate the knowledge level as low, medium, high)
________________________________________________________________________________________

What other characteristics of the target audience? (such as language(s) spoken, access to technology, and cultural barriers) might affect this educational program)
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
Goal Work Sheet

Issue: ________________________________________________________________

Target audience: _______________________________________________________

What is the ultimate goal of this educational effort? _______________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

List any intermediate objectives that must be met before the ultimate goal can be realized: ______________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

For the goal, please list at least one objective that will be used to measure success:

Objective 1: __________________________________________________________
Measure: ____________________________________________________________
Intermediate (    ) or long-term (    )

Objective 2: __________________________________________________________
Measure: ____________________________________________________________
Intermediate (    ) or long-term (    )

Objective 3: __________________________________________________________
Measure: ____________________________________________________________
Intermediate (    ) or long-term (    )
Educational Methods Work Sheet

Educational methods are activities, events, or experiences that lead to clientele change or action. Several individual and group methods can be used to deliver subject matter. Educational programs should include a mixture of activities, methods and styles. Educational methods include:

1. **Group**: Educational event conducted with multiple people in a setting; may be delivered in person or via technology
2. **Mass media**: Educational event delivered via radio, television, newspaper, Web pages, email list(s), or multiple types
3. **One-to-one**: Intensive site visits with clientele that usually last at least 1 hour; the duration of the visits needs to be documented
4. **Letters or newsletters** sent to clientele that are educational in nature; these must contain subject matter content and not be solely for publicity such as announcing an event

What types of group methods could be used in this plan, and what subject matter is best taught in a group setting?
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

What types of mass media could you use to reach and educate the intended audience, and what types of subject matter are best conveyed using them?
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
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What types of one-to-one methods could be used, and what types of subject matter could best conveyed via these methods?
____________________________________________________
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____________________________________________________

How could letters, newsletters, or electronic communications, and what subject matter is appropriate for these methods?
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
How could method and/or result demonstrations be used, and what could be taught through these methods?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________
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How could you use online methods to deliver the material? ________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

What does this plan offer to clientele who prefer to learn via visual educational methods?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

What does this plan offer to clientele who prefer to learn via auditory educational methods?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

What does this plan offer to clientele who prefer to learn via tactile educational methods?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
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What additional methods could be used to ensure that all preferred learning styles are reached?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
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Volunteer Engagement Work Sheet

How could the leadership advisory board be involved in this educational program effort?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
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How could a program area committee and/or task force be involved in this effort?
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List and describe the involvement of any additional volunteers in this program effort.
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What training/orientation would be required to prepare the volunteers to work in this program?
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How will you recruit new volunteers to sustain the program in the future?

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How will volunteers be recognized for their assistance/involvement in the program?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________