Focusing on implementing the Program Development Model

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Anytime there is a district or state Extension meeting, there is a considerable amount of discussion related to program development. However, too many times this discussion gets reduced to discussion related to how many committee meetings we have, and not how to actually engage in the program development process.

It is easy to quickly develop a mentality related to establishing a goal that a specific number of committee meetings must be conducted and when those meetings are conducted we have satisfied our obligation related to program development.

However, program development is much more than simply conducting a specific number of committee meetings. Committee meetings are the platform that is used to identify the issues and develop educational content to address those issues.

Remember programs are the method of delivering educational content and encouraging clientele change in knowledge gained, skills acquired, changes in attitudes/beliefs, changes in behavior, adoption for practices, or adoption of technology.

According Ripley, Cummings, Lockett, Pope, Wright, Payne, Kieth and Murphey (2011), Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's product is educational programs and the process used to create educational programs is called program development. Committee meetings are critical venues used to implement this series of processes that enables Extension to develop relevant, high quality educational programs (Ripley et al., 2011).

The hallmark of Extension programming has been our involvement of clientele committees in identifying issues, program planning, implementation of programs, evaluation of programs and
interpretation of programs. Investigate the interactive program development model below to further understand each phase and step of the model (Ripley et al., 2011).

Volunteers of committees are fundamental to program development and Extension programming. At times, we tend to make the program development process too complicated and become "bogged down" by focusing on the number of meetings held rather than utilizing these meetings to ensure we are implementing the program development model.

Let’s focus our attention on more fundamental details of implementing the program development model;

1. **Do we have the right people on our committees?**
   Committees should be diverse in terms of demographics and thinking. Mr. Lin Wilson, District Extension Director Emeritus, contended that if all you have on your committees is your "pallbearers", you'll never have anyone disagree with your thoughts regarding programming, but you'll also never have a very innovative program.

2. **Are the committee meetings being conducted at the appropriate time of year?**
   Meetings to implement the planning phase of the model need to be conducted prior to the time agents are developing their annual plan of works.

3. **Are the committees meeting enough to implement the program development model?**
   The phases of the model include, planning, design, implementation and measure (evaluation). Agents should ensure that they are meeting and involving their clientele appropriately in all phases of this model.

The following provides a description of the phases and steps within these phases of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Development Model (Ripley et al., 2011);
Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Development Model

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

**Phase 2: Design**
- **Step 5** Identify or develop content.
- **Step 6** Develop the (educational) activities.

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

**Phase 4: Measure**
- **Step 9** Conduct an evaluation of the entire program to measure its impact. Remember—It is necessary to distinguish between an educational activity and an educational program. An educational program is a series of sequential educational activities.
- **Step 10** Report the results to stakeholders. The primary purpose for evaluating educational programs is to share with committees to refine future educational efforts. Comprehensive evaluations provides excellent data to report our programs’ impact to stakeholders.
- **Step 11** Conduct a long-term follow-up evaluation to determine the program’s economic impact.

**Phase 5: Follow-Up**
- **Step 12** Report the results to stakeholders. The primary purpose for evaluating educational programs is to share with committees to refine future educational efforts. Comprehensive evaluations provides excellent data to report our programs’ impact to stakeholders.
- **Step 13** Conduct a long-term follow-up evaluation to determine the program’s economic impact.
As stated in the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service *Creating Excellent Program* publication, “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” (Ripley et al., 2011, page 6).

Here is the web link for the publication entitled "Creating Excellent Programs"

There is no question that Extension programming is known for our involvement of committees in identifying issues, program planning, implementation of programs, and evaluation of programs and interpretation of programs. However, we can improve our programming capacity and committee effectiveness through conscious engagement of the program development process.

Reference