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Excellence in Extension: Two Products for Definition and Measurement

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Excellence in Extension: Two Products for Definition and Measurement

Abstract

Two products of the Excellence in Extension effort of ECOP will be useful at every level of the Extension System. The first is a "pocket card." One side describes what makes Extension unique and defines Excellence of Extension, and the other side lists the seven most important criteria to identify Excellence in Cooperative Extension. The second product is the Matrix of Criteria of Excellence in Cooperative Extension. This matrix will assist Extension: (1) To be accountable for invested resources; (2) To continually improve the organization's effectiveness; and (3) To describe its strengths and differentiate itself from other agencies and organizations.

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Background

Through the efforts of a work group established by the Excellence in Extension Task Force of the Extension Committee on Policy (ECOP) there have been two products designed to be of use to Extension personnel at all levels. (See "[Can We Define and Measure Excellence in Extension?](#)" in this issue for a fuller discussion of the work group efforts.) One is a 3x5 "pocket card" that is to be widely distributed within Extension that lists in brief terms "Uniqueness and Excellence of Cooperative Extension" (on one side), and "Criteria for Excellence in Cooperative Extension" (other side). The other is a Matrix of the Criteria of Excellence in Extension, with corresponding definitions and measures for the seven highest priority criteria.

The Card

The Excellence in Extension pocket card can be readily carried by Extension administrators, other Extension personnel, and leaders to provide concise descriptors of the Extension system to share with university administrators, potential funders, legislators, and the media.

One side of the card describes what makes Extension Unique and defines Excellence of Extension.

Uniqueness

- Land-grant mission links the university to the people
- Established presence and grassroots involvement in local communities
- Program and funding partnership of local, state, regional, and federal entities
- Research-based, lifelong learning
- Empowerment of people through education and community-based problem solving.

Excellence

- Anticipation of and response to critical and emerging issues
- Establishment of partnerships and collaborations
- Engagement with clientele to plan, implement, and evaluate programs
- Utilization of client expertise to facilitate change
- Educational programs that result in economic, social, and environmental impact
- Utilization of volunteers as teachers to enhance and extend education.

The other side of the card lists the seven most important criteria to identify Excellence in Cooperative Extension:

Criteria for Excellence in Cooperative Extension

- Cooperative Extension is a major component of land-grant university outreach/ engagement.
- Diverse stakeholder input is used to shape programs.
- Clients are satisfied with Cooperative Extension and its programs.
- Quality Extension programs are identified and valued.
- Extension programs result in changes in individuals, families, and communities.
- Economic impact is derived from Cooperative Extension programs.
- Funding is supplied for Cooperative Extension.

The Matrix

The Matrix of the Criteria of Excellence in Cooperative Extension was developed to be meaningful to a variety of stakeholders and their corresponding diverse perspectives of Extension. It is based on two conceptual frameworks. One axis represents the traditional academic perspective of universities. The four columns on this axis are: Teaching and learning; Discovery and scholarship; Engagement; and Management. This approach reflects and values the language of research and

teaching faculty and university administrators.

The second axis represents a perspective that is more familiar to Extension personnel and supporters. The five rows in the matrix are: University commitment to Extension; Relevance of Extension programs; Quality of Extension programs; Outcomes and impacts; and Funding and external support (See Figure 1).

The matrix is more usable because the potential measures are prioritized in importance groups. Extension administrators identified the seven most important criteria for Excellence in Cooperative Extension (summarized on the pocket card). The second tier measures of importance, as well as the remaining measures, should be useful to individual institutions as these institutions address issues in their unique situations. Some Extension administrators have already found that matrix is very useful for them to give it to their university administration and to faculty when they attempt to explain what constitutes excellence.

For each of the seven most important criteria, detailed definitions and a means measuring are provided. This will make aggregate measures and comparisons across institutions more meaningful. Currently, institutions are using unique definitions that are rooted in history and tradition, which have been problematic. The definitions and the means of measuring the seven most important are provided in outline form after the matrix below.

Figure 1.
Criteria of Excellence in Cooperative Extension

	Land-Grant University Commitment to Extension	Relevance of Extension Program	Quality of Extension Programs	Outcomes & Impacts	Funding & External Support
Teaching Learning	-University recognizes Cooperative Extension teaching/program quality	(2) -Meeting client needs/Access (2) -Proactive/Responsiveness -Faculty-Student engagement -Volunteers as teachers	(2) -Systematic program development and evaluation process -Research-based programming -Learner-centered teaching -Use of appropriate teaching methods including technology -System for assessing quality teaching -Collaborative programs	(1) - Knowledge/Attitude/Skills/ Aspirations (KASA) and behavioral change (2) -Students recruited/enrolled	
Discovery Scholarship	(2) -University recognizes Cooperative Extension scholarship	(2) -Applied research to solve problems -Local input helps to shape research agenda	(1) -Best Practices/ Exemplary Programs -Publications/Reports -Systematic documentation of program evaluation and curriculum development -Participation in eXtension -Integration across disciplines/university	(2) -Documenting program results through peer review	(2) -Grants and contracts for applied research, Cooperative Extension, and integrated research/Cooperative Extension efforts
Engagement	(1) -University recognizes Cooperative Extension as major component of outreach/engagement	(1) -Use diverse stakeholder input to shape programs -Demonstrated inclusiveness -Community-Student engagement -Facilitates partnerships around issues - Graduate/alumni engagement	- Community/Cooperative Extension collaborative identification of goals/problems -Sustained partnerships -Breadth and magnitude of public involvement -Building social capital in communities -Staff involved in professional service activities -Cooperative Extension seen as credible	(1) -Economic Impact (2) -Enhance public good (Environmental and Social Impacts) -Participatory evaluation -Youth exposure to higher education opportunities -Increased enrollment of Cooperative Extension clientele as students in land grant institutions	-Local support -Program funds -Economic value of volunteers
Management	(2) -Financial support of Cooperative Extension in relation to university support -Position within University structure -Promotion/Tenure status of Cooperative Extension personnel	(1) -Client satisfaction -Publics advocate for Cooperative Extension -Client diversity -Value to limited resource audiences	-Market share -Quality and diversity of staff -Sustainable programs -Multi-state efficiencies	(2)-Return on investment -Systems for accountability	(1) -Funding for Cooperative Extension (2) -Leveraging resources (2) -External funds generated -Staff size -Fee-based programs

Matrix--Criteria and Measures Defined--Seven Priority Criteria

1. University recognizes Cooperative Extension as a major component of outreach/ engagement

Definition

Cooperative Extension is recognized as an integral part of the university's outreach/engagement effort both on and off campus.

Measures

- A. The role of Cooperative Extension in outreach/engagement is specifically documented in university strategic plan(s).
- B. Cooperative Extension accountability measures are integrated into systems for university-wide reporting.
- C. University legislative relations units include Cooperative Extension in seeking university funding.
- D. The scholarly activity of Cooperative Extension faculty and professional staff is reflected in a success rate in achieving tenure and/or promotion that is proportional to faculty across the institution.

2. Diverse stakeholder input is used to shape programs

Definition

Actions are taken to seek and use client and partner input that result in relevant educational programs.

Measures

- A. Organizational policies encourage participation by diverse stakeholder groups.
- B. Number of stakeholder groups who provide input.
- C. Number of individual stakeholders who provide input.
- D. Evidence that stakeholder input was utilized.

3. Client satisfaction

Definition

Satisfaction level of clientele with the educational programs and services received from Cooperative Extension.

Measures

Two approaches to measuring client satisfaction would prove useful. Either could be utilized independently or they could be used in combination.

- A. Degree of client satisfaction with overall Cooperative Extension.
- B Degree of client satisfaction with specific programs delivered by Cooperative Extension

4. Best Practices/Exemplary Programs

Definition

The quality of outstanding/exemplary Extension projects, programs and initiatives is recognized and valued.

Measures

- A. "Programs of Excellence" are identified based on such criteria as importance, innovation, capacity for replication, sustainability, focus, scope, relevance, and results.
- B. Scholarly productivity of Extension faculty and staff as indicated by the number of publications, creative programs and materials, decision-making tools, etc.
- C. Excellence in Extension faculty and staff performance as indicated by the number of awards and recognitions received.

5. Knowledge/Attitude/Skills/Aspirations (KASA) and Behavioral Change

Definition

Short and medium term outcomes are the result of Cooperative Extension educational programs.

Measures

- A. Program evaluation tools are utilized to measure outputs such as number of people reached.
- B. Program evaluation tools are utilized to assess the extent of change in knowledge, attitude, skills, aspirations, and behavior attributable to Extension programs.
- C. Program outputs and outcomes are documented and disseminated.
- D. Impact results are utilized for programming decisions and accountability.

6. Economic Impact

Definition

The economic value derived from programs delivered by Cooperative Extension

Measures

- A. Evaluation methods are utilized to measure the economic impact of Extension programs.
- B. The economic impacts are documented and included in reporting.
- C. Economic impact results are used in programming decisions and in establishing accountability.

7. Funding for Cooperative Extension

Definition

Amount of funding by sources for Cooperative Extension

Measures

- A. Total federal budgeted funds appropriated from CSREES, USDA
- B. Total state budgeted funds appropriated
- C. Total local budgeted funds in support of program costs
- D. Total funds received from grants and contracts
- E. Other annual revenue from such sources as fees, registrations, sales, endowments, and other cost recovery
- F. Amount of volunteer time contributed (value to be determined)

Conclusion

Every Extension worker will benefit by being able to readily describe the Uniqueness of Extension and the elements of Excellence of Extension. Measuring the most important criteria of Excellence in Extension will help Cooperative Extension as a system to be accountable for the resources invested in the organization and the managers of those resources to continually improve the effectiveness of the entire organization. These criteria will also enable the system to describe its strengths and differentiate itself from other agencies and organizations.

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