MARYLAND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK•EASTERN SHORE

Fact Sheet

Fact Sheet 399

The Advisory Committee and the Program Development Process: Planning Together for Productive Programs

The overall effectiveness of any county Extension educational program depends on the changes made by people who participate in the program. Experience has shown that the most successful programs are based on need. When real needs or problems are identified, Extension has a greater opportunity to help clientele improve their situation.

Advisory committees serve the important function of suggesting needed programs to Extension agents. To carry out this responsibility, advisory committee members should understand and carry out the steps involved in the *Program Development Process*.

Although it may sound very sophisticated and complex, the *Program Development Process* is really very common and practical. It has been practiced in Extension work for decades. It is simply a process that facilitates and encourages advisory groups, volunteers, clientele, and Extension faculty and staff to assess the needs of people and their communities and develop educational programs to meet those needs. As an Advisory Committee member, your participation in this process is important. The process consists of the following steps:

1. Know the situation.
2. Identify the problems.
3. Analyze problems and select solutions.
4. Establish program goals.
5. Design a plan of action.
6. Implement the plan.
7. Evaluate the results.

Some principles that support this process are:

1. People perceive the planned program as one that includes problems they want to solve.
2. People accept a program if they see it as a means of solving their problems. People resist when they are told what their problems are and what changes they should make.
3. People must have a sense of identification with common groups or organizations.
4. Program planning is an educational (teaching-learning) process that leads to action.
5. Planning is done with people, not for them.
6. Priorities and objectives relevant to people's problems, needs and interests are determined cooperatively with those who are to accept and influence changes.

7. Desire for change can be awakened or stimulated through involvement.
8. Human resources are used and supplemented in a way so that strength, rather than dependency, is developed.

Your Participation in the Program Development Process

STEP 1. Know the Situation

Advisory committee members should be knowledgeable about their county or community situation and aware of the trends and public issues that affect residents. This knowledge is necessary to successfully plan and conduct effective Extension programs. As an advisory committee member, you will assist agents in examining the county or city and assessing clientele needs, interests and attitudes. An understanding of Extension philosophy and organizational structure will help in this process. In general, knowing the County situation will provide answers to the question: Where are we?

Advisory Committee Members' Role

Your years of experience and your knowledge of the county will help agents determine the county situation. You also will determine socio-economic trends, available resources; community services, and policies and issues affecting the public. Facts based on county studies will offer more objective information about the community and its residents.

- Who are the people in your community (age, sex, education, employment and living conditions)?
- What are the social, economic, cultural and demo graphic characteristics of the community?

Advisory Committee Members' Responsibilities

Gain a better understanding of the overall county situation and its relation to Extension programs.

- Recognize your clientele.
- Recognize the characteristics of the people and groups you represent.
- Recognize the problems and issues affecting your clientele.
- Become more familiar with Extension's organizational structure, mission and programs.
- Identify issues that relate to Extension's programs.
- Determine resources available for Extension's programs.

At the committee meeting, present an objective view of the characteristics of your community and clientele. Also, identify issues and trends affecting the people who are related to Extension priority programs.

STEP 2: Identify the problems

A problem can be defined as the gap between what is and what should be - a situation or condition that can be changed through educational efforts.

You can help agents identify those conditions or problems that affect clientele and fall within Extension's mission and programs. Identifying the problems and needs of people and using these

problems and needs as the basis for programming will make Extension's programs more meaningful to people because they can see how the program relates to their needs.

Advisory Committee Members' Role

You can provide an objective view of the problems affecting your community, citizens and neighbors.

Problems can be identified through observation, news articles, community agencies, reviews of current research, public hearings and in general, listening to the concerns of individuals.

Advisory Committee Members' Responsibilities

Try to better understand those conditions that can be changed through educational efforts.

- Identify conditions and problems affecting people.
- Identify realistic problems that can be solved within Ex tension's mission and programs.
- Use a variety of methods to identify problems.

At the committee meeting, identify conditions in your communities needing improvement and make recommendations for programs.

STEP 3: Analyze Problems and Select Solutions

Different solutions should be explored for every problem. In the process of selecting the best solution, you need to collect infon-nation, analyze the advantages and disadvantages of that solution, and anticipate the consequences. It also is important to consider the resources, expertise and how realistic the alternative is as an educational Extension program.

Advisory Committee Members' Role

In the analysis process, committee members may ask:

- How many people are affected by the problem?
- To what degree is the quality of life being affected by the problem?
- What solution may be the best?
- What feasible resources does Extension have to solve the problem?
- What community resources could be available for Extension to solve the problem?

Advisory Committee Members' Responsibilities

Have a better understanding of the process and the skills necessary to select the best solutions.

- Seek and consider different alternatives for the solution of the problems.
- Collect information, analyze the advantages and disadvantages, and anticipate the consequences.
- Select the best solutions to the problems identified.
- Identify the resources and expertise needed to implement the proposed solutions.

At the committee meeting, participate in a decision making process to prioritize needs and problems and select program alternatives to meet them.

Suggest possible resources (human services, funding, materials, facilities) available in the community.

STEP 4: Establish Program Goals and Objectives

The establishment of program goals and objectives is deciding what is expected to happen or what the participants will do at the conclusion of the educational programs in order to resolve the problem. Also, anticipate what the outcome will be when the problem or need has been corrected.

Goals and objectives express the desired future situation. They should be realistic, feasible and capable of being measured. Goals and objectives should reflect what will be done, how it will be done and who will be involved.

Advisory Committee Members' Role

Your perception of the "real life" situation in your community can assist agents in setting realistic and achievable goals. You will help identify expected levels of outcomes - what the constituents will be doing after the program has been conducted. Your input will help agents prioritize objectives according to the urgency of need or problem.

Advisory Committee Members' Responsibilities

Anticipate what is expected to happen to the participants after the problem has been solved.

- Set realistic, feasible objectives (what is possible).
- Prioritize the objectives in order of importance.

At the committee meeting, help agents identify expected program results. Identify how people will benefit from the programs to be conducted.

STEP 5: Design a plan of action

After objectives have been set and priorities established, it is necessary for the Extension agent to design a plan of action. The plan of action represents an outline of educational actions to be taken with people to enable them to reach their personal goals and the program objectives, The plan of action includes the program objectives, the learning experiences, appropriate methods and techniques to introduce the subject matter and the opportunities for the participants to be involved in the teaching-learning process.

Advisory Committee Members' Role

You can help agents plan these educational experiences. You may recommend local facilities, community resources and program delivery methods.

Advisory Committee Members' Responsibilities

You will be able to suggest educational activities to help participants reach their goals and achieve program objectives.

- Suggest a variety of learning experiences to meet needs and differences of participants.
- Suggest different methods to conduct the county pro grams according to the resources available.
- Suggest community agencies for supportive program services.

At the committee meeting, suggest possible educational activities to help the program participants move from the present situation to the desired future situation through achievement of program objectives.

STEP 6 : Implement the Plan

In this stage, the agent prepares detailed plans for the learning experiences, activities or events. The agent selects the content or subject matter and the methods to use, manages activities using appropriate teaching techniques, involves volunteers, evaluates the activities, makes adjustments, and reevaluates and updates the plan of work.

Advisory Committee Members 'Role

Stay informed and attend educational activities when possible. Provide feedback to agents and the planning committee about the programs,

Recruit and invite others. Volunteer to help implement programs.

Advisory Committee Members' Responsibilities

- Attend programs and provide support
- Act in leadership roles when available.

At the committee meeting, promote and announce programs and invite others to attend.

STEP 7: Evaluate the results

Find out how well the program objectives have been met, how program participants have benefited, and what social and economic differences the programs have made in their lives. Program evaluation helps identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programs. It is also used to compare cost effects of different programs, gain support for continuing expansion, andjustify past or projected allocation of resources, Basically, evaluation helps determine the effectiveness of the overall Extension program.

Advisory Committee Members' Role

You can assist agents in their program evaluation efforts, in the analysis of evaluation results and cost benefits, in supporting effective programs and in decisions related to resources allocated. You may relate the clientele's opinions about the usefulness and benefits of the program to the agents.

Advisory Committee Members' Responsibilities

- Attend and participate in scheduled meetings where program results and evaluations are presented and discussed.

- Support and speak for effective county programs that have demonstrated desired results.

At the committee meeting, assist agents in analyzing results as they relate to program effectiveness and make recommendations for future programs.

Advisory Committee Member - Program Development

Self Evaluation

After participation in the Extension program Development process, I consider myself to have:
(Circle the appropriate number which best describes you.)

	Low		Medium		High
1. Gained an objective and clearer understanding of my county's situation, its people and its resources.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Obtained more awareness of the problems and needs of my county.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Acquired more skills in the process of selecting different alternatives to solve a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Obtained a better understanding of how to anticipate or predict program results.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Acquired a greater awareness that different learning activities can be used to achieve different objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Gained a better understanding of my role in program evaluation, support and allocation of monies, and resources.	1	2	3	4	5

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, University of Maryland, College Park, and local governments, Thomas A. Fretz, Director of Maryland Cooperative Extension, University of Maryland.

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1985