CORE COMPETENCY-- APPLIED RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

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This core competency area includes program evaluation (the process that leads to the formation of value judgement regarding a specific Extension program), applied field research (discovery of new knowledge) and community needs assessment. Problem/need identification, evaluative instrument design, data collection, interpretation of findings, and application of findings all from a part of the total expectation of what the extension educator will do in the area of research and evaluation.

Problem or need identification forms the foundation and rationale for extension programs. Extension educators should be well acquainted with and skilled in the application of problem/need identification methods.

It is essential that the extension educator be able to document change as a function of extension programming, using both formal and informal methods. Crucial to the functioning of an effective extension educator is the ability to design and use evaluative tools and methods to enhance the potential of extension programs. Program evaluation allows the educator to facilitate meaningful local change, while providing feedback.

While it is not expected that all field staff conduct research projects, it is important that field staff understand research concepts, the general process, and are able to assess the validity and credibility of research conducted by others. The possession of such knowledge will enable the field agent to successfully incorporate research data and conclusions into reports/documents useful to program implementation (i.e., grant requests). Additionally, research literature can be used to effectively determine program priorities, direction, and implementation methods. Field staff who wish to conduct field research will obviously need a much higher level of understanding in this arena.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: MSUE will schedule “workshops” at different locations in the State. These will be announced in MSUE In-Service Catalog.

RESOURCE MATERIALS:

A set of educational materials are included under “Evaluation Resources.”

In addition, the following materials are available at the center for Evaluative Studies, ANR Education and Communication Systems.

a. Conducting Research in Extension Education: A Local Learning Seminar

b. Evaluating Learning Outcomes: A Local Learning Seminar

c. Videotape: Program Evaluation Standards and Models (Sanders & Reineke)

d. Videotape: Politics of Evaluation (Michael Patton)

e. Videotape: An Integrated Approach to Planning and Evaluation (Bennett & Rockwell)

f. Videotape: Survey Methods (Don Dillman)

g. Videotape: Focus Group Interviews (Jerry Migler)

h. Videotape: Interpreting and Using Quantitative Data
II. Reading Materials:


