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Community Development¹

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Community Development as an educational program is designed to develop people's abilities to create the kind of community in which they wish to live and work. The educational aim of this extension program is to help citizens find the ways and means to improve their economic well-being and quality of living. This is done by working directly with citizens and public officials on topics and problems that concern them most.

Community development education starts when Extension staff and local citizens engage in developing a climate whereby they can interact and deal effectively with even the most controversial issues. Citizens of diverse points of view are encouraged to discuss their differences in a creative manner. The educational process includes the identification of community opportunities and problems, establishment of goals and priorities, fact collection and analysis, study of alternatives, selection of an agreed upon course of action, and implementation of this action. Community development extension education enables local people to create their own program with help from various sources realizing that the community has the right and obligation to accept or reject this help and advice.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

In the early stages of a program, consideration should be given to a study of resources available or potentially available to the community. Program operation should continually evaluate the resource situation in view of changing conditions.

A community's resources may be classified as human, institutional, and physical. Resource

development is concerned with the efficient use of these resources in the community.

- a. Human resources are the people of the community. Human resource development entails raising the productivity and information level of people.
- b. Institutional resources include all services - government, schools, communication, transportation, etc.
- c. Physical resources include climate, water, minerals, and land and the improvements thereon.

All aspects of resource development are closely related and interdependent. The development of human resources provides the necessary base for successful development of physical and institutional resources. Adequate institutions are necessary for the fullest development of people. People who are better informed create more adequate institutions and make better use of physical resources. Utilization of physical resources in turn contributes to the development of people and institutions. The degree to which the Extension Service is involved and the manner of involvement will vary between counties.

EXTENSION WORKER ROLES

County workers are the front line members of Extension's community development team. They live in the community and have day to day contact with the local people. Among their many roles are creation of awareness of situation, stimulating action, and expediting and facilitating the use of human,

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institutional, and physical resources. Another very important task of the county worker is that of providing linkages between the local community and consultants who can help the community formulate alternative solutions to problems and opportunities. These consultants may be extension specialists, governmental agency personnel or other individuals with relevant expertise. State extension specialists plan and develop educational programs in their areas of subject matter competence for community leaders, general public, and extension and other agency personnel. County agents and specialists work to help citizens be better able to make community decisions, but they do not attempt to make the decisions for them, nor to promote their own favored solutions to the problems.

FRE EXTENSION OFFERINGS

Extension specialists can assist in community development efforts by providing a framework for analyzing community problems. They are skilled at providing information and stimulating discussion on local, state, and national issues where action must be taken by a group or public body. In addition, community development specialists within the Food and Resource Economics Department are prepared to offer technical expertise on a number of specific problem areas, including programs to:

1. Improve the understanding of the community's economic base, including the role of the agricultural sector, and to increase the capacity of citizens and decision-makers in Florida communities to understand and anticipate the economic consequences of growth and change.
2. Provide information on the economic implications to be realized from alternative uses of Florida's land resource, particularly as they relate to agriculture.
3. Assist on matters pertaining to water and the environment through information and interpretation of regulations, provision of input to those making the regulations, and casting of the problems in a decision-making framework for consideration by citizens, agency personnel and elected officials.

4. Provide economic information on selected community services and facilities to enable Florida Communities to better plan and deliver those services.
5. Work with government leaders on matters of state and local government finance including the provision of a computer search of federal programs available to communities for assistance on specific problems.
6. Assist in identification and training of local community leaders.
7. Provide economic education materials and programs on farm production and marketing for the small, limited resource farmer.

Florida communities and rural areas are experiencing rapid socio-economic change. Community change, by its very nature, creates problems and a need for information. People need information which will improve their understanding and increase their ability to cope with the changes occurring in the community. Several of these educational programs described above are designed to meet the needs of communities experiencing change.

The county extension worker can greatly assist all of these program efforts by communicating community issues to the specialist and by providing access to community leaders, civic organizations, local agencies, public officials and others requiring assistance.

For more information on CRD programs contact:

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