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EXTENSION

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Three Types of Extension Programming and What it Means for Program Development ¹

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Introduction

There are three main kinds of programmatic efforts that overlap slightly:

- *needs,*
- *problems, and*
- *issues.*

Often the differences among these program types are easy to distinguish, sometimes the differences are subtle.

Each effort requires a slightly different approach to planning and implementation, so it is important for you to be able to identify these types.

Definitions

Needs programming

Needs programming is designed to assist people in gaining **knowledge and skills** that can be applied to improve their lives -- by addressing an identified need. *Examples include nutritional education or parenting programming.* Needs

programming is often like a school curriculum, drawn from a subject-matter base. This sort of programming is lead by the agent, in response to client needs. The audience is identified, targeted, and recruited by the agent. Outcomes of **needs programming** tend to be:

- increased knowledge of clients, and
- increased competencies of clients.

Problems-based programming

Problems-based programming focuses on specific audiences. Problems-based programming aims to develop solutions through education to change client **practices**. *Examples range from the specific to the complex and examples include increasing the use of seat belts or improving boater safety.*

Since many agencies often address the same problem, it is important for the agent to have networks and linkages with other organizations, agencies, and businesses. Specific audiences are targeted, but outreach is enhanced by working with collaborators who may help with teaching and

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recruitment. Outcomes of **problem-oriented programming** should focus on behavior change.

Issues programming

Issues programming focuses on problems or issues of widespread public concern. These are identified at the state or federal level. Nonetheless, you have a great deal of control you have over the implementation of this sort of programming. This programming requires a significant amount of state-level support, that is most often seen in the form of design teams.

Florida's State Major Programs (SMP), such as FL515 (Successful Parenting/Family Development in Florida) or FL511 (Nutrition and Diet in Florida) are good examples of issues programming. The design teams cannot possibly know the situation in every county in Florida. The agent must tailor the information that comes from the state-level to the local county to make the information relevant. So, the agent's role in issues programming is to become an expert on the issue while keeping in mind the local situation.

The agent, in effect, becomes the broker of tailor-made information.

The targeted audience for **Issues programming** is generally a very large group. Recruitment is often done by the agent, collaborators, volunteers, and former clients. Results of issues programming tend to be:

- increased public awareness, and
- understanding of the issue
- changes in client practices related to the issue, and
- involvement of the citizens in the issue.

Survival Tips:

Needs and Problems programming require the agent to be in touch with the local situation. Agents must be able to target and recruit a specific audience. The agent strives to increase knowledge and skills, and to change client behavior. In the next section we

will discuss how to identify needs, problems, and target audiences.

For issues programming, the general audience and some needs/problems are identified. However, your county may be different. It is your job to be the local expert on the issue, don't expect state specialists or design teams to do or know everything. You must still identify a specific local audience and determine issue-related needs and problems that the State Major Program (SMP) may not identify. Your programming should be tailored to the county situation.

Much of Florida Cooperative Extension programming is issues-based, so you must learn how to effectively incorporate issues-based programming in your Plan of Work (POW). It is your job to adapt state-level materials and programming to be relevant to the people in your county. That means sometimes you will have to write your own materials or curriculum on an issue-based program.

Further Information

Taylor, Barbara. 1994. "Home Economics Programs Address Critical Issues." Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville. Fact Sheet HE6005.