AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EXTENSION ADVISORY COMMITTEES

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Affirmative Action and Extension Advisory Committees

Introduction

Affirmative action means that one takes deliberate steps or acts to make something happen. It means that one declares or is dedicated to something. In the case of civil rights, it means that Cooperative Extension personnel take deliberate steps in the whole programming process to provide equality of opportunity to all potential audiences. Further it means that one takes conscious, deliberate steps to determine the racial composition of the potential audience. If minorities are part of the potential audience, then affirmative steps must be taken to provide them opportunity to (1) participate in educational programs, (2) serve on advisory committees, (3) serve as judges, supporters, resource people, etc.

The intent of affirmative action is to eliminate all existing discrimination in programs and employment, whether purposeful or inadvertent and to involve minorities to assure a continuing condition of nondiscrimination.

Advisory committees are to provide input and linkage between Extension and its potential audiences. When minorities are part of the potential audience it is important that they become members of advisory committees. Minority representation on advisory committees can help plan strategies to involve minorities in educational programs.

Definition of Potential Audience

The definition of a potential audience varies among program areas and it drives the composition of an advisory committee.

Homeowner Horticulture's potential audience is the total number of people who own homes (Targeting Minority Participation Guidelines, 1979).

Community Resource Development's potential audience is considered to be leaders in the county who may need assistance on issues and programs of community or public
concern and impact. More specifically they may be governmental (federal, state, local) officials (appointed and/or elected). Also officers and members of organizations with a major interest in helping their community solve its problems and achieve its goals (Targeting Minority Participation Guidelines, 1979).

Commercial agriculture's potential audience is the total number of owners and/or operators of commercial agriculture enterprises in the county (Targeting Minority Participation Guidelines, 1979).

Sea Grant Extension Program's potential audience includes those who live, work and/or participate in coastal activities that relate to coastal, marine, estuarine and wetland resources in Florida (Clark, 1986).

Four-H's potential audience is the projected youth population, ages 8 to 18, in the county for 1987 (Instructions FY 1988-1991).

Home Economics' potential audience is the total number of households in the county (Instructions FY 1988-1991).

The potential audience for the Energy Extension Service includes small scale energy users in hospitality, which includes hotels, motels, restaurants, and other small commercial businesses. The building construction, real estate industry, condominiums, and public aide service agencies as well as agricultural users through the existing Cooperative Extension network (Governor's Energy Contract).

Structure of Advisory Committees

Overall County Extension Advisory Committee

Membership composition of the Overall County Extension Advisory Committee shall include representatives of Affirmative Action geographic planning areas, minority groups, 4-H Youth, Home Economics, Agriculture, Community Development, and Sea Grant Extensionn (originally Marine Advisory) where appropriate. Other community leaders may be included when appropriate (Extension Advisory Committees and Program Development, 1975).
Community Resource Development Advisory Committee

Community Resource Development work related to Agriculture, Home Economics, 4-H and Sea Grant Extension may be planned through existing Agriculture, Home Economics, 4-H and Sea Grant Extension Committees. All other organized Community Resource Development work should be planned through a separate County Community Resource Development Committee. The Overall County Extension Advisory Committee will no longer be considered the Community Resource Development Committee (Extension Advisory Committees and Program Development, 1975).

Criteria for membership and operational procedure of a Community Resource Development Advisory Committee shall be such that there is no discrimination based upon race, color, or national origin. These criteria include appropriate representation of minority groups on the Community Resource Development Advisory Committee. The Community Resource Development Advisory Committee shall establish priorities concerning geographic areas, community groups and communities to be served by the County Extension office.

4-H Youth

The Affirmative Action Plan for the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences requires a 4-H Expansion and Review committee. However a 4-H advisory committee will suffice in meeting affirmative action guidelines for planning and overseeing a balanced 4-H education program if the following requirements are met (Strengthening 4-H Programs through Affirmative Action, 1979).

1. Must be active and functioning effectively
2. Must have minority representation
3. Must have representatives from throughout the county
4. Membership should consist of approximately one-third youth
5. Must agree to carry out the functions of the 4-H Expansion and Review Committee. These functions include:

* delineate geographic areas
* help determine needed 4-H clubs or units
* assist in securing volunteer adult and youth leaders
* recommend when needed, modification of geographic areas.

**Agricultural Advisory Committee**

Membership for the County Extension Agricultural Advisory Committee is comprised of persons representing each of the major commodities or subject matter programs important to the county. Priorities in programs shall be established for commercial farmers, low-income farmers, and other agricultural interests. When minorities are part of the potential audience they must be represented on the advisory committee (Extension Advisory Committees and Program Development, 1975).

**Home Economics Advisory Committee**

Membership of the Extension Home Economics Advisory Committee shall include representatives of Affirmative Action geographic planning areas, racial-ethnic groups, and socioeconomic groups. For Home Economics programs, the Extension Home Economics Advisory Committee shall be the primary body used to determine program priorities and emphasis. The adopted priorities shall reflect designated geographic areas and/or target audiences to be reached. The Homemakers Council will not suffice as the Extension Home Economics Advisory Committee (Extension Advisory Committees and Program Development, 1975).

**Sea Grant Extension Program Advisory Committee**

The Sea Grant Extension Program is implemented under special funding. A County Sea Grant Extension Program Advisory Committee shall be organized in each coastal county that implements the Program. Membership on the committee shall represent all appropriate coastal, marine, estuarine and wetland interests and should be comprised of members representing racial composition of potential clientele.
Documentation

It is important to document affirmative acts associated with Extension Advisory Committees. Specific information (Extension Advisory Committees, 1975) that is to be maintained in the files of the county Extension office includes:

1. Letters of appointment
2. Announcements of meetings
3. List of persons attending
4. Minutes of business conducted
5. Visits to recruit committee members
6. Refusals by minority persons to participate on committees
7. Membership, by race

It is implied that minutes of the 4-H and Home Economics advisory committees (Affirmative Action, 1972) will also:

1. Reflect discussions or review of
   a. location of community boundaries
   b. where additional units are needed
   c. compliance of existing 4-H units or Home Economics clubs
   d. securing of volunteer leaders (4-H only)

2. Procedure for rotation of membership and linkage to other planning bodies.

A membership rotation plan shall be on file in the county Extension office (Compliance Review Guide).
Bibliography


Clark, Marion, Assistant Dean, Sea Grant Extension Program. Interview with M. Clark, December 4, 1986.


Extension Advisory committees and Program Development, October 1975, pp. 1 and 2.


Guidelines Concerning the Role and Functions of County Extension Advisory Committees in the Florida Cooperative Extension Service

John T. Woeste

INTRODUCTION

This paper delineates current guidelines for Extension advisory committees in the Florida Cooperative Extension Service (FCES) through a series of statements and supporting rationale relating to the advisory committee's roles and functions and reflecting a consensus reached by the Extension Administrative/Supervisory Group in April 1982 and revisions made in January 1989.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE SYSTEM

Advisory committees play an important role in Extension's charge to help people at the local level identify their needs and to provide educational programs to meet those needs.

The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) has long recognized its programs are more successful when it involves individuals affected by the problems it addresses. In fact, citizen input has generally been recognized as one of the strengths of Cooperative Extension programs.

The concept of clientele involvement in programming is addressed throughout Extension's literature and is validated by relevant research, social science theories, and experience in Florida and other states. This literature identifies a number of reasons for seeking clientele involvement in programming. Clientele involvement facilitates the following:

- Increased accuracy in identification of clientele-perceived needs.
- More effective decisions on program priorities and methods.
- More rapid acceptance of change.
- More rapid and accurate communication of program efforts and clientele feedback on both program impact and need for education and research.
- Increased local support of program efforts.
- Multiplication of professional resources through the use of volunteers.
- Exemplification of the democratic ideal.

The literature also states that involved clientele eventually develop individual and group problem-solving skills and eventually assume leadership roles.

The literature defines the small group or committee as an effective and efficient vehicle for accomplishing lay involvement in programming and

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Guidelines Concerning the Role and Functions...

cites group input as enabling efficient use of time and of providing "collective wisdom" and identifying with and legitimizing by a support body. Group input is based on this rationale:

1. It is the position of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service that lay input and involvement is essential to the planning, development, and implementation of sound county Extension educational programs, and that a lay advisory committee system represents an effective and efficient means of achieving this end.

Although local needs and concerns provide the basis for establishing county Extension programs' priorities, these programs should gather input for program decisions from several additional sources. For example, knowledge of national and state issues, new research information, and trends affecting local clientele are essential for developing and maintaining a dynamic Extension program. Since such trends are not always evident to those at the local level, Extension specialists and other resources play a key role in keeping agents informed about emerging issues, concerns, and trends at the national and state levels, thus complementing local level information. The Extension advisory committee plays a central role in assisting agents in developing effective programs by assessing the information from the many sources. Therefore:

2. A primary role of the Extension Advisory Committee is that of facilitating the identification of client concerns and providing guidance in program decision making based on information from a variety of sources. However, the responsibility for design and implementation of the county Extension program rests with the County Extension faculty.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

The literature on Extension and other educational agencies generally delineates three interrelated categories of advisory groups or committees:

- Overall Advisory Committee
- Program Committees (e.g., Agriculture, Home Economics, Community Development, 4-H, Marine, Energy, etc.)
- Program subcommittees addressing specific program thrusts within program committee areas.

In addition to these basic groups, ad hoc committees may be established within each category when deemed necessary. Figure 1 shows a diagram of this committee system.

3. It is the position of the FCES that the advisory committee system, as delineated in Figure 1, will be implemented in Florida counties.

The extent and complexity of an Extension advisory committee system within a particular county would depend in large part on the breadth, depth, and demands of the Extension program in that county. All counties would not necessarily have committees within each general category. However:

4. Regardless of the scope and demands of the Extension program, each county will have, as a minimum, an Overall Advisory Committee.

The literature also indicates the desirability of communication between committees within categories. Such communication is generally accomplished when selected committee members serve in dual membership roles. This overlap in committee membership facilitates program coordination and program and organizational decision-making. Therefore:

5. In cases where more than one committee exists, a linkage system will be established between committee categories, and/or committees within categories.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEES' ROLES**

Research in the use of Extension advisory committees, as well as practical application in the field, suggests the following functions as appropriate for each category within the advisory committee system:

**Overall Advisory Committee**

- Helps assess general situation in the county.
- Provides long-range program direction for a total county Extension program.
- Advises on program emphasis and balance.
- Assists in identifying and obtaining resources needed for the conduct of the county Extension program.
Figure 1. Extension Advisory Committee System.

- Provides legitimization of and accountability for the county Extension program with stakeholders.
- Advises and assists in public relations for the county Extension program.
- Facilitates coordinated efforts between Extension and other appropriate agencies and/or organizations.
- Performs an advocacy role for Extension.

**Program Committees**

Program committees accomplish the following:
- Help analyze the county situation with regard to the specific program area.
- Help identify problems, needs, and concerns.
- Help agent(s) in setting program priorities.
- Assist agent(s) in clarifying the nature of the problem to be addressed by education programs.
- Assist agent(s) in exploring possible educational problem-solving approaches.
- Legitimize the program and assist agent(s) in identifying needed resources (e.g., individuals, facilities, funds, etc.).
- Maintain knowledge of and visibility in programs implemented.
- Review program results with agent(s).
- Assist in accounting to various stakeholders.
Program Subcommittee

The functions of the program subcommittees are essentially the same as those of the program committees, but are more narrowly focused within specific program thrusts. Consequently:

6. It is the position of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service that the above functions will be assumed by Florida Extension advisory committees.

MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION

Current knowledge suggests a number of criteria or qualifications for committee membership. A synopsis of these criteria follow:

Overall Advisory Committee

- Local leaders with broad-based interests (e.g., general county leaders).

- Representatives from each Extension program area (they represent and provide linkage with specific program committees).

- Representatives from groups and organizations relevant and meaningful to the overall Extension program, such as agricultural associations, chambers of commerce, financial institutions, government bodies, community organizations, and occupational and professional groups.

- Representatives of the population of the county for meaningful or required demographic variables, such as age, sex, race, ethnic group, income, and geographic location.

Program Committees

- Representatives of actual and potential clientele within a program area

- Specialized leaders with specific interest/expertise in a program area.

- Representatives of existing subcommittees within a program area.

- Representatives from relevant groups and organizations meaningful to a program area.

- Representatives of the population of the county for demographic variables required and/or meaningful to a program area.

Program Subcommittees

- Representatives of actual and potential clientele within a subcommittee's area of focus.

- Representatives with specific interest or expertise in a particular program area of focus.

- Representatives from relevant groups and organizations meaningful to a subcommittee's area of focus.

- Representatives of the population of the county for demographic variables required and/or meaningful to a subcommittee's area of focus.

The composition of each category of advisory committees should ultimately rest with the judgment of the County Extension Agent. However:

7. Decisions as to representation required to fulfill the functions of each committee shall be guided by the previously specified criteria for membership composition.

COMMITTEE SIZE

Current studies of group dynamics are inconclusive about the optimum size of discussion groups. However, there is general agreement that the upper limits of such groups should be 15 to 20 members. Therefore:

8. The size of Extension advisory committees shall rest with the judgment of the agent, based in part on the complexity and scope of the committee's role and areas of responsibility and the important demographic characteristics associated with the population on which representation is based.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS

Given that the ultimate responsibility for program decisions rests with the Extension faculty, the Extension faculty should have substantial control over the specific composition of the committee membership. Therefore:
9. The responsibility for appointment of advisory committee members shall rest with the Extension faculty. However, it is recognized that committee input into the identification and selection of potential appointees is important and should be provided. It is also recognized that in some cases county commissions may require input into committee member selection and appointment. In those cases the initial recommendation for appointment shall rest with the county Extension faculty. The appointment of members of the Overall Advisory Committee should be confirmed by the county Extension Director and the Dean for Cooperative Extension.

TENURE OF MEMBERS

The literature suggests that the membership of standing committees should be rotated periodically for purposes of obtaining new ideas, knowledge, and perspectives, allowing new leadership to emerge, and stimulating the dynamics of the group. Ad hoc committees, on the other hand, are temporary by design, and membership normally would not be rotated prior to completion of the committee task(s).

10. Tenure of standing committee member should be a three-year term with one-third of the membership rotating off each year. There should be a one-year period before any previous member may be returned to the committee from which rotated.

OFFICERS

The concept of "office" has been deemed appropriate to and desirable for the advisory committee, particularly within standing committees. A "permanent" chairperson is beneficial to continuity; the need for additional officers is dependent on the functions of the specific committee.

11. A chairperson (non-Extension staff) shall be designated for each standing committee. The need for and desirability of other officers shall be based on the specific nature and needs of the committee.

FREQUENCY OF MEETING

The literature varies considerably concerning how often advisory committees should meet, with some writers being very specific as to number of times per year, others being very general. Determining basic criteria for frequency and timing of meetings are the specific tasks and responsibilities of the particular committee. Therefore:

12. Extension program area and/or subject matter advisory committees shall meet formally within each program year as needed to fulfill the delineated responsibilities. However, it is Extension Policy that the Overall Advisory Committee shall meet at least one time in any calendar year.

INTRA-ORGANIZATION COORDINATION

The research and Extension components of the Land Grant System form an effective and essential team in problem-solving for Florida citizens. Interaction between county Extension and research center faculty expedites the problem-solving process. One way to enhance this interaction is through the use of advisory committees.

13. The Research and Education Center (REC) Director will be an ex-officio (non-voting) member of the Extension Overall Advisory Committee in the county housing the Center. Involvement of the director and center faculty on other Extension committees and subcommittees within the home county is encouraged. Copies of minutes from overall and program advisory committee meetings should be provided to "appropriate" Center Director(s) and Department Chairs by the County Extension Director (CED). Appropriate Center Director or Department Chairs would be those involved with the commodity(ies) discussed in the minutes.