COUNCIL LEADERSHIP
21st Century Programs, Governance & Membership

What Is the Council's Role
in Setting Priorities for Program Development?
Council Handout

As representatives of people in their communities, county extension council members are knowledgeable about local educational needs and can assist faculty in setting priorities for the local extension program. Through this module, council members will:

- Increase awareness of their role in setting program priorities
- Identify ways to establish those priorities.

Companion modules ―"What Is the Council's Role in Program Implementation?" and "What Is the Council's Role in Evaluating and Reporting Program Outcomes?"― provide additional information on the extension council's role in educational program development and delivery.

State Statutes

262.557 Formulation and administration of extension program
The university may formulate an extension program in the counties of the state and shall be responsible for the administration and execution of the extension program in each county.

262.587 Where council established, university to hire employees and consult with council on programs
In counties in which there is a council the university shall:
(2) With the advice and counsel of the (county) council, formulate extension programs in the county and it shall be responsible for the administration and execution of the extension programs in each county.

262.590 Recommendation by council-administration of county share of costs-council to receive property
The council in any county shall have the right and duty to:
(1) Make recommendations and suggestions to the university concerning the extension program;

The Extension Program

The extension program referenced in Section 262.557 of the state statutes is the county's overall plan for meeting residents' educational needs across program areas. The current statewide program areas are:

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
Extension

1. **Agriculture and Natural Resources ―** Agriculture and natural resources education provides citizens with 21st century tools to enhance profitability, strengthen communities and protect the environment.

2. **Business Development ―** Business development education assists business start-ups, helps businesses remain competitive and prosperous, and creates more wealth for the community.

3. **Community Development ―** Community development education helps citizens tap into local strengths and University resources to create communities of the future.

4. **4-H Youth Development ―** Youth education connects parents and youth with the latest research and best practices to help young people be valued, contributing members of their community.

5. **Human Environmental Sciences ―** HES education provides Missourians with research-based programs on health, nutrition, parenting, aging, divorce, personal finance, housing, consumer action and more.

The local educational program is developed through a process in which extension council members and regional faculty identify and prioritize local educational needs. The extension council is the public body officially designated to work with the University of Missouri to:

- Identify concerns in the community as well as current and emerging trends affecting residents of the county
- Make recommendations about needed programs to the University
- Ensure educational program access to residents, groups and organizations in the county.

An educational program is a sequence of learning activities or events that addresses a locally identified educational opportunity or need. Educational programs focus on specific outcomes to improve people's lives through the practical application of research-based knowledge and resources. An educational program may be comprised of several meetings, activities or events.

Extension council members provide invaluable insight into the range of issues and educational needs of the county and region. As extension councils make recommendations about program priorities, they must consider local needs; social, environmental and economic trends; and the potential impact of educational programs offered to community residents.

Setting Program Priorities

To make informed decisions about program priorities, council members and regional faculty members need information on current programs and outcomes, trends and available resources. Additionally, input from local residents can ensure broad representation of the diverse educational needs of the county.

The following strategies can ensure that the information is comprehensive and accurately reflects the needs and desires of county residents:

1. Review the county's plan of work, annual report and current program offerings for a current snapshot of the local extension program and its overall impact.

2. Identify current and emerging social and economic trends affecting the county; review the demographic fact sheet for your county *(Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis, http://oseda.missouri.edu/countypage/).*

3. Seek public input on the issues most important to county residents:

   a. Host town hall meetings in multiple communities throughout the county.

   b. Develop a survey for county residents. Mail to individuals or work with the local newspaper to publish.

   c. Ask local officials (city and county) for their views on issues, trends and needs.

   d. Invite community groups to participate in identifying programmatic needs.

4. Review University of Missouri Extension Named Programs to identify educational programs to address the needs and issues identified.

With the information in hand, extension council members and faculty can begin prioritizing educational needs and matching them to extension resources ― both faculty and curriculum ― available locally, regionally and statewide. The council may wish to hold a special meeting on program priorities to ensure adequate time can be devoted to this important council function.

Using the accompanying council activity, councils and faculty can take a detailed look at current programs to assess their overall benefit and identify opportunities to reach new audiences.

Additional Resources

1. University of Missouri Extension Named Programs

2. County program plan, budget and annual report

3. County program director, regional specialists and paraprofessionals serving the county; regional director, program directors and state specialists

4. City/county officials and other local stakeholders

5. Evaluations of programs and/or program activities

6. **County Fact Sheets from the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis** *(http://oseda.missouri.edu/countypage/)*

7. **Program Planning and Development Web site** *(http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/programdev/plm/index.html)*

8. Results of local public input processes

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Trainer Notes and Council Activity

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- Become aware of their role in setting program priorities
- Identify ways to establish those priorities.

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Tips for Facilitating

The following tips can assist trainers and council members in getting the most out of the *"What Is the Council's Role in Setting Priorities for Program Development?"* training module:

1. Determine who will be the presenters (council member, specialist, county program director).

2. Review *"What Is the Council's Role in Setting Priorities for Program Development?"* handout, PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes and council activity.

3. Review resources identified in module.

4. Prepare materials needed for council activity.

5. Place *"What Is the Council's Role in Setting Priorities for Program Development?"* on the council agenda. Involve Regional Council Leadership Team in training as needed.

Council Activity

Preparation time: 1 hour or less

What is needed? *(Note: Online resources may be used if Internet access is available.)*
- *"What Is the Council's Role in Setting Priorities for Program Development?"* PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes
- Computer, projector and screen

- Copies of *"What Is the Council's Role in Setting Priorities for Program Development?"* handout
- County plan of work
- Council budget
- Current inventory of programs delivered in the county
- Newsprint/flipchart, markers, easel and masking tape

At the Meeting

1. **Introduce *"What Is the Council's Role in Setting Priorities for Program Development?"* training module.**
   (5 minutes)
   Deliver PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes.

2. **Distribute and review module materials.** *(10 minutes)*
   Discuss how the council assists in setting program priorities.

3. **Lead Activity** *(15 minutes)*
   Using the inventory of programs delivered in the county:

   1) Review each program:

      a. Did the program serve the people the most, or did it serve the most people? In other words, did the program serve the greatest need or the greatest number of people?

      b. What was the lifelong change or greatest impact the program had on participants?

      c. Did the dollars spent produce a long-term benefit ― socially, environmentally or economically?

      d. Who in the community is not being reached? What audiences need our assistance?

   2) Review all budgeted and actual program costs, including recovered costs as applicable.