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USING A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT TO EVALUATE EXISTING AND FOCUS FUTURE TEAM PROGRAMMING

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ABSTRACT:
Background: During 2001, the Bear River Basin Cluster in Southeastern Idaho conducted a needs assessment to evaluate the awareness and use of University of Idaho Extension and assess community issues for future programming in all areas of extension. As a team, the cluster provided more in depth education and information than could be offered by individual faculty. This research report focuses on family and youth issues from the assessment. Methods: Four hundred households were randomly selected from driver's license/voter registration lists. Analysis consisted of descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests to assess relationships between variables. Results: The overall return rate was 44%. The top four topics for which information had been previously sought were 4-H, food preservation/safety, nutrition/health, and family finance, respectively. For future programming, the top areas of importance were youth drug abuse prevention (82%), youth violence prevention (79%). budgeting income (76%), nutrition/health (71%), strong families and parenting (71%), and an adequate job and income (71%). Further results focus on relationships between variables. More respondents with children placed importance on youth drug abuse ($p<0.05$) and violence prevention ($p<0.05$), an adequate job/income ($p<0.01$), and strong families/parenting ($p<0.01$) than those without children. Those who were younger indicated more importance on youth violence prevention ($p<0.01$) and strong families/parenting ($p<0.01$) than older participants. More female respondents placed importance on strong families/parenting ($p<0.01$) and nutrition/health ($p<0.01$) than males or families. Conclusions: Needs assessments can verify if current efforts are meeting community needs or if programming should be redirected to focus on more important clientele issues.

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PARTICIPATORY NEEDS ASSESSMENT: IMPROVING EXTENSION FORESTRY PROGRAMS BY MAKING LEARNERS PARTNERS

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ABSTRACT:
Under traditional needs assessment methods, extension educators work with local advisory committees to guide the direction of extension programs in a region. These methods have their place, but more participatory needs assessment methods allow greater freedom to select participants from targeted groups of people than advisory committees do, as membership in the latter is often dictated by formal regulations or appointments by elected officials. These tools also provide opportunities for stakeholders to contribute directly to the development of programs that will meet their educational needs in the most effective ways. The University of Idaho has used focus groups, quality assurance committees, and localized steering committees to enlist direct involvement by forest owners, loggers, and others in designing programs and educational materials intended to help them improve forest management practices. Historically, the majority of participants attending University of Idaho Extension forestry programs were the same people attending repeatedly. In programs planned using participatory methods, fewer than half of the participants have typically indicated previous involvement in forestry education or assistance programs. Seventy-five to ninety percent of these participants typically indicate they will implement improved management practices as a result. Participatory needs assessment methods may be vital to improving extension forestry programs by targeting under-served audiences and empowering self-directed learning. These techniques can be used in tandem with qualitative research efforts to further improve our understanding of forest owners and workers and how to work with them more effectively.

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ENGAGED YOUTH, ENERGIZED COMMUNITIES: YOUTH CIVIC ACTIVISM FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT:
Traditional leadership programs have long been a staple of youth development. Leadership development for young people meets a number of needs, including opportunities for relationships with caring adults, peer group support, and meaningful engagement in community and civic life, as well as enhancing life skills such as critical thinking, public speaking and planning. Through the Ford Foundation's Youth Leadership for Development Initiative, the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development has brought together domestic and international organizations promoting leadership among diverse youth through innovative methods of community development and activism. Together they have unearthed best practices, shared strategies and examined methods to ensure youth development and program sustainability. With evaluation techniques developed and tested by Social Policy Research Associates, these community-based organizations (CBOs) have built their own capacity to create effective programs and meet the developmental needs of the youth participants so that they can become catalysts for positive change in their communities. Building on information at the 2002 NAE4-HA conference in Virginia Beach, participants of this interactive and informative session will (1) hear success stories, challenges overcome and lessons learned by youth and adults at several of the CBOs involved in YLDI; (2) share the final results of three years of research into strategies for success, including effective program evaluation techniques and usage of assessment data in decision making and program improvement; (3) become familiar with the asset-based approaches and practical tools for youth engagement effectively used by many of these organizations.

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