

**University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture
Cooperative Extension Service**

**Environmental Scan
Conducted April 2002**

Group Data Reports Summarized and Trended from County Extension Agents

At the April 2002 staff meetings of the areas, the county extension agents responded to a designed set of questions regarding the existing and future environment of the Cooperative Extension Service. The county extension agents responded to the same set of questions that were posed to the administrative group of the Cooperative Extension Service by Carol Anderson, an organizational facilitator, at the Extension Administrative Retreat held February 6 and 7, 2002.

After the responses were collected from the county extension agents, the data were summarized by examining frequency of the responses. A second level of analysis identified themes and trends. The findings follow.

1. What changes (trends, discontinuities) in the environment will influence how we design and perform our work?
 - a. Economic changes?

Declining agricultural economy

- fewer farms
- fewer farm jobs
- urbanization
- fewer full-time farmers
- less tobacco and traditional agriculture/more horticulture and non-traditional enterprises
- more off farm employment – farmers have to work because of need for health insurance and farm is not meeting economic needs
- local economies are less dependent on agricultural dollars

Changing income structure within families

- dual-income families
- more single parent households

-youth working to help support families

Slowdown in the economy

-high unemployment, loss of jobs

-recession, slowdown in the economy, income insecurity

-management of resources including money management, credit, credit cards,
debt delinquency

-budget cuts for Extension – state and federal -- less dollars for programs and
retention of quality agents

-global economy, loss of jobs to Mexico and other places

b. Social changes?

Aging population

-aging of baby boomers

-care for elderly, senior care

-social contributions of the aging population

-grandparents raising children

Changing family structures

-more women working

-single parent families

-both parents working

-latch-key kids

-young people more involved in careers

- shrinking time with family
- grandparents raising children
- smaller families, fewer children to work with

Increasing diversity in local communities

- community make up changing from Caucasian to more diverse make up
- influx of non-citizens
- “browning of America”
- language barriers
- cultural diversity awareness
- stereotyping

Increasing awareness of parenting skills

- increase in number of parents who don't want to “parent”
- lack of parent responsibility
- lack of parental involvement
- lack of parenting skills
- shrinking time with family, whole family is working/shift work

Increasing awareness of health care issues

- overweight, obesity, couch potatoes, new diseases by influx of immigrants,
diabetes
- environmental health issues
- rising cost of health care (costs and effects on family)
- insurance

-public becoming more health conscious

C. Technological changes?

Increasing demand for mobility and ease of access to information

- more people have cell phones/computers
- increasing computer and technological literacy by clientele
- 24/7 access
- agents need wireless connections and cell phones
- on-line accessibility to resources
- access to information at your fingertips

Connecting to people *and* people to people through technology

- homemaker "chat room"
- email mailing lists
- conference calls, satellite
- Internet
- use digital images to communicate and educate

Affirming personal approach in Extension

- so much information for clientele "out there" – we have personal touch; can interpret, sort, and help client find meaningful/useful information
- too much time with machines, not enough time with people – people still want one on one interaction

Identifying technological “issues”

- constant need for updating – hardware, software, agent training
- organization needs to adapt or die
- medium isolation – impersonal nature of technology (headphones, computers)
- need simpler materials for functionally technologically illiterate
- cost of technology to clientele and to Extension, digital divide
- access is limited in some locations
- “If it’s on the Internet, it must be true.”

d. Competitive changes?

- competition for time
- competition for audiences with other organizations, agencies
- competition for money/funding
- competition for credit/identity of Extension – both materials and within coalitions
- not to be seen as a duplication of services
- competition for volunteers and leadership

e. Other changes?

No clear themes emerged. The most relevant topics that emerged were related to Dr. Todd’s vision for Extension and changes in University administration.

2. Who are our key stakeholders?

The following top ten listings are given by frequency counts:

1. Elected officials (local and state government)
 2. 4-H members, youth and parents
 3. Taxpayers
 4. Schools
 5. Farmers (both full and part-time)
 6. Homemakers
 7. Extension staff and their families
 8. Council members
 9. Volunteer leaders
 10. Families
3. What feedback do they have for us around service delivery?
- a. Strengths

Delivering unbiased research-based information

-credibility

-quality, professional service

-dependable direct link to the land grant university –UK and USDA

Grass roots driven programming

-local advisory groups

-program ownership

Affirming personal touch through Extension services

- face-to-face, one-on-one
- located in every county
- we are local, there in the community
- caring, truly interested in clientele
- local recognition of leadership

Accessible services

- free services, affordable
- flexible, variety of program delivery methods
- local, in every county
- accessibility to community/public/available

b. Gaps

Inadequate marketing of Extension

- we aren't well-known – need support from UK similar to RETC positions for marketing
- hard to find in the phonebook
- as population grows, Extension becomes less known

Quality of publications

- publications outdated
- lack of publications/curriculum limiting programming (particularly 4-H)
- literacy level too high, need more pictures
- hard to find publications on the web site

-not professional in terms of reproduction

Lack of state-wide focus in programming

-do fewer things and do them well

-need to prioritize

-need state level program direction and leadership

-specialists need to expand programs reflecting newer trends and opportunities

-sometimes behind the curve, leads to gaps in programming

-information gap between UK and counties, delay

Perceived inconsistency between local and UK expectations

-clientele (local) expectations vs. UK (state) expectations

-not involved with clientele enough – too much time on administrative tasks

-too much time out of county

c. Measures for success

Assessment of clientele feedback

-changes in behavior, practice changes

-knowledge gained

-economic impact, money saved

-participation in programs

-testimonials, personal stories

-referrals

-repeat users

Funding support level

- financial support through funding
- number of grants
- new economic development monies

d. Suggestions for change

Of all suggestions named, only three had moderate support:

1. Increased marketing/visibility, statewide marketing
 2. Motivational awards for agents and incentives for participation in state committees
 3. More use of technology/cell phones, digital cameras, program presentations
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4. What have we learned from our history that should be considered as we move forward?

Grass roots programming is essential

- leader-led and initiated programming
- local based programs get local support

Change is a constant

- change is inevitable and good
- we have to change with the times

-change is expected

-we must change to keep up with the competition and clientele needs

Increased need for marketing Extension

-we must do a better job

-promote to stakeholders/legislators

-need to be more visible

Personal-focused relationships

-clientele appreciate individual relationships

-high touch/one-on-one

-stay people-centered

-personal contact is better than web sites

Focus on mission

-we can not be all things to all people

-don't abandon traditional audiences, projects and programs ("remember who brought you.")

-stick with the mission of Extension