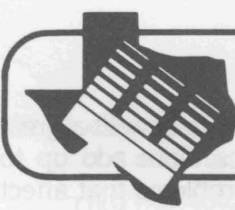


New 4/11 4/8/90



Texas Agricultural Extension Service

IMPAC Integrated Major Program Area Curriculum

An IMPAC program is an intensive educational effort with a clearly defined goal based on problems and learning needs of a target audience. The program is intended to result in understanding and use of information by the targeted audience.

The purpose of an IMPAC program is to get results--to have an impact that people see and accept as valuable.

It's a total, concentrated effort which Extension educator and committee(s) or task forces initiate to deal with a major problem/issue that needs attention. It has a central and specific focus.

Characteristics

1

The goal identifies a solution (*desired change/end behavior*) to a problem (*concern or felt need*) of a specific (*targeted*) audience.

2

The program is sufficiently intensive and comprehensive to assure that desired results can be obtained; the program shows a sufficient time and effort to allow the change to occur.

3

Sufficient subject matter is outlined in the planned program activities to enable the target audience to learn how/why to make the change indicated in the goal. Subject matter is taught in a proper sequence for learning. An issue-based program may require an interdisciplinary mix of subject matter to deal with multiple, complex problems.

4

A series of coordinated, complementary educational activities are conducted, including an adequate number and variety of techniques to help the target audience(s) learn and use the information taught, ranging from mass media to educational meetings. One or more of the meetings is one in which principles (fundamentals) and several points of subject matter are covered. Teaching techniques include opportunities for participants to see, hear, read and practice what is being learned.

5

Agents are expected to use six or more different types of contact with the same targeted audience, including group techniques, individual consultation, mass media and indirect methods (such as newsletters with educational information).

6

A plan for measurement of change by targeted audience is developed, including (a) types of results expected, (b) indicators of change--the evidence needed to show change, (c) method of collecting information, and (d) time of evaluating. A report of the evaluation will be made.

Prepared by Mary G. Marshall, Extension Program Development Specialist

What IMPAC Is

An Extension IMPAC program is intensive effort devoted for a specific period of time. Resources are focused on a serious need or problem. Various activities and experiences are conducted in planned sequence and aimed at a common goal. And the program can enable many people to realize important results which affect them.

Extension IMPAC programs are designed to make a difference in people's lives and the larger community. These educational programs often address problems that are complex and interrelated with other problems. Change doesn't happen easily or immediately. IMPAC programs need your efforts, inputs of other professionals, and resources from various disciplines, agencies and organizations. Therefore, IMPAC programs may need to be focused for more than one year.

A planned curriculum is used to move people through the educational experience. Attention is given to awareness stages as well, in which the targeted audience is exposed to a problem or need and drawn into the programming (goal-setting and even helping to define the program needed to solve their problems).

An IMPAC program usually lasts a year or more. One could be done in 3-4 months or take 3-4 years. The shorter the time span, the greater the concentration of time the program will need. An intensive campaign on safe pesticide use, for example, might get done in 6 weeks, but will take perhaps 80 percent of work time during those weeks. A program to reduce teen pregnancies or change attitudes about drug use likely will not see measurable results for several years.

When an IMPAC program requires an interdisciplinary approach, the problems and audiences are targeted within the issue and each is given its own "focused" program within the larger issue.

What IMPAC Is Not

Many Extension efforts are not IMPAC programs even though they take considerable time to handle. In some situations activities are traditional and occur each year--such as county fairs, field days, repeated office visits and phone calls from county residents. These activities are important and should be considered a part of the total responsibility of the Extension faculty member. People

who are reached by these contacts benefit a great deal, but the various benefits seldom add up to impressive results on serious problems that affect many people.

An IMPAC program isn't an isolated workshop, seminar, course, or even a single event. It's not a variety of offerings available cafeteria style--"pass through and take a few things." It's not individualized response to continuous and urgent requests for information.

Choosing IMPAC Program Focus

In selecting IMPAC programs, decisions must be made about program priorities. An Extension agent first must examine the county's Long-Range Extension Program, then listen to program committee members and other groups, and talk with clientele and potential clientele. The challenge is to use all these sources to identify alternatives for priority program initiatives for the Extension program year.

First – Analyze each opportunity

- Is the problem or need clearly identified by up-to-date information?
- Does the program come within the mission of Extension?

Second – Consider each alternative

- Do people think a program effort on this problem is important?
- Will the results be important to a sizable number of people?
- What will the consequences be if you don't do something?
- Will a major project in some other area produce more important results?

Third – Select appropriate alternative

- Will it contribute substantially to Extension's long-range goals in your area of work?
- Will there be a direct benefit to people who take part?
- Can you get enough support and resources to succeed?

- Does your Extension Council/committee support a major effort in this area?

Thus the choice is made. Council members and Extension professionals have decided cooperatively that they will support program efforts in this direction...and they've agreed that some time and effort made in certain other areas can be diminished.

The annual plan ("plan of work") will then reflect the importance of this program and the proportion of time to be devoted to its efforts, as well as to those in other important areas that form Extension's total program.

Targeting the Audience

"Targeting" the audience is simply narrowing the potential of "all people" to those who would benefit most from taking part. It's defining who the program is for. It means organizing program elements to the needs and capabilities of the people who are expected to take part—including 1) *subject matter scope and depth*, 2) *sequence*, 3) *methods*, 4) *language and reading level of written materials*, and 5) *facilities*. It means knowing the learners' prior knowledge/experience or skill within the area of concern.

In an issues-programming era, targeting also requires involving all appropriate audiences over time. Issues usually involve more than one audience and each will require different programming, because learning needs and effects of critical issues can differ for the audiences.

How will you find out what those things are? How much do people already know? What is the subject matter that is most relevant to them? At what level should information be given out? What are the most effective methods to use with this targeted audience?

These are concerns the educators must address, using their expertise to find out where program needs exist and what kinds of needs they are. Educators must also be sufficiently skilled in educational design (methodology and curriculum sequencing, as examples) to prepare an effective learning program.

What variables are relevant for narrowing the target audience? These could be **economic factors** such as occupation, type of business, employment status, income level or socioeconomic status;

social factors such as age, gender, racial/ethnic identity, marital status, role in family, family size, age of children; **geographic factors** such as type of community, type of residence, isolation, mobility (new resident?); and **individual/personal factors** such as previous experience in an area of need, leadership role, health, educational level, or interest in the subject/problem.

In the process of assessing need and defining people who have that need, the educator finds out the levels of awareness, skill/knowledge/attitude and practice (use) of the information.

Targeting an audience goes beyond simply identifying them. It includes making contacts with potential participants, their representatives and recognized leaders to assure involvement. Leaders should be involved in helping to set goals, helping individuals participate, and even providing evaluation input to increase program effectiveness.

Targeting also means that there will be repeated program participation over time by the same (type of) people. The program will be designed so that these people attend a series of sequenced learning experiences, each adding a little to the knowledge/skill base and building on what has been learned before. This careful arrangement gives people opportunity to grow, go through the adoption process, and even expand their interests into other areas.

"Targeting" should never be understood to mean restricting attendance by people outside the well-defined audience group. Affirmative action guidelines use the principle that a program may **discriminate toward** a group (in the sense of selecting purposefully, "arranging in favor of") but may not **segregate from** or prohibit participation by people who do not fit within the described targeted audience. Educators may wish to add an explanation to program notices that reads something like: "This program is designed to meet the interests of [young adults with pre-school children], but others may also wish to participate."

Conducting IMPAC Activities

A well designed marketing strategy is needed to assure that people in the targeted audience are reached with information about the program, especially its potential benefits for them. It is important to gain the attention and acceptance of people who are perceived by the target audience to be its

leaders/spokespersons. When those leaders endorse the program (and support it by their participation), they are able to encourage attendance by direct and informal means.

In conducting IMPAC programs, teaching methods will give participants an opportunity (within their capability) to read, hear, see and practice what is being taught.

Although some programs can get important results for many people by using only one **method** (meeting series, consultations, mass media), IMPAC programs require use of several different **techniques** to reach and influence people in a planned sequence of related activities--all aimed at the same goal and the same audience. A combination of educational meetings, demonstrations, radio programs, and newspaper releases is one example.

Various methods, a combination of several techniques, will be used to help people obtain the information/skill that is most useful to them. Different people learn in different ways, so the educator will need to see that the same material is presented in various ways--and the same material should be presented more than once, so people have opportunity to re-learn and reinforce their previous learning.

The methods are to coordinate and build onto each other; they should be consistent with the stated program goal and the learning needs/skills of the audience.

Evaluating for Goal Attainment and Other Results

Two important aspects relate to program evaluation--assessing the program in process, so that adjustments can be made while improvement is still helpful, and evaluating for outcomes, to learn

the effects that people derived from the program. The latter is usually done in terms of the program's (stated) goal(s).

Each IMPAC plan can coordinate these into one on-going evaluation. The information obtained during and after programming is added up to determine the overall effectiveness of the program.

It is mandatory, in this case, to establish a clear evaluation plan at the start, so that each part builds toward the whole. When you identify "accountability indicators" at the start, you are deciding on the specific signs that will tell you how well the program is meeting its goal(s). Then you collect information on these indicators in appropriate ways at appropriate times--before, during and after program activities, from potential and actual participants and others who are affected by the issue.

Reporting is an extremely important step in the programming process. It is just as much the Extension faculty member's responsibility to document the outcomes of programming efforts as it is to plan, conduct and evaluate them. The payoff of evaluation is when the findings are reported. Reports about IMPAC programs provide follow-up information to clientele, the public and to Extension resource providers. Reports help educate people about what Extension does.

Also see L-2389 - *A Guide for Developing Goals/Objectives*

Educational programs conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, handicap or national origin.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of Congress of May 18, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Zerle L. Carpenter, Director, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System.