



Steps to Success: Integrating Annual Planning and Performance Appraisal in Tennessee

Issue: Beginning in early 2000, over 1,200 Tennessee Extension staff and stakeholders, in more than 50 multi-county meetings, gave input for what later was crafted into a Strategic Plan for UT Extension. This plan, unveiled in December, 2000, included the following key aspects for program and staff development:

- streamlined performance-based appraisal system
- streamlined reporting system
- respond proactively, not reactively, to timely issues

The strategic planning process revealed that improvements needed to be made in the program planning and performance appraisal processes. The county four-year Plans of Work were either often ignored or required frequent change to address emerging local needs and staff changes. Annual Plans were determined to better meet county staff needs. A performance appraisal taskforce viewed integration of the planning process and performance appraisal as an essential step to optimizing Extension’s human potential. Dean Charles Norman also encouraged development of systems in an electronic format when possible rather than paper-based processes.

Plan and Deliver: A task force representing a cross-section of Extension planned and implemented new systems. The traditional four-year planning process with occasional updates was dropped in favor of annual plans. Task force recommendations were implemented via Lotus Notes databases for annual planning and performance appraisal. The group established a three-part rubric for agent and area specialist performance appraisal: program development, program accountability and professionalism. Agents with office management responsibility were evaluated in a fourth area, County Director. In the three main rubrics, descriptions are provided for 28 different duties. County Director duties add nine more. Ratings for each duty are assigned as **Unsatisfactory**, **Meets expectations**, or **Exemplary**. The rubric for program development, without the descriptions, is shown below.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT		<u>Comments:</u> <u>Goals:</u>
Needs Assessment	<input type="radio"/> E <input checked="" type="radio"/> M <input type="radio"/> U	
Communicates Pgm Issues	<input type="radio"/> E <input checked="" type="radio"/> M <input type="radio"/> U	
Networking	<input type="radio"/> E <input checked="" type="radio"/> M <input type="radio"/> U	
Funding	<input type="radio"/> E <input checked="" type="radio"/> M <input type="radio"/> U	
Appropriate Delivery Methods	<input type="radio"/> E <input checked="" type="radio"/> M <input type="radio"/> U	
Clear Implementation Steps	<input type="radio"/> E <input checked="" type="radio"/> M <input type="radio"/> U	
Plans for Evaluation (Tools/Methods)	<input type="radio"/> E <input checked="" type="radio"/> M <input type="radio"/> U	
Reaches Diverse Aud./ CR Parity	<input type="radio"/> E <input checked="" type="radio"/> M <input type="radio"/> U	
Outcomes / Impacts Clearly Defined	<input type="radio"/> E <input checked="" type="radio"/> M <input type="radio"/> U	
Program Development Rating		<input type="radio"/> E <input checked="" type="radio"/> M <input type="radio"/> U

An example of the descriptions for “needs assessment” is shown below:

Needs Assessment – The priority program is developed based upon clientele needs and priorities. A needs assessment documents reasons that the program should be conducted by Extension and serves to justify expenditure of agent and other resources in addressing the problem.

Unsatisfactory	Meets Expectations	Exemplary
Little or no information in the plan that identifies the issue(s) being addressed as a need or problem that should be addressed by Extension. Information identifying the issue(s) as a need or a problem is outdated, insufficient or otherwise inappropriate.	The needs assessment includes appropriate sources and information. The needs assessment provides evidence of a priority issue which can, and should, be addressed by a planned Extension educational program. Stakeholder input was obtained as a part of the process.	Needs assessment procedures are described that include input from a variety of sources, including non-traditional or under-served clientele, coalitions, other government agencies, local/grassroots bodies, and other stakeholders.

The Extension Agent attaches the impact statement(s) for the planned programs to their annual performance appraisal document. The Agent may also attach any other electronic files to describe their efforts. The Annual Planning and Performance Appraisal timeline follows:

November 1: Annual Plans for the upcoming calendar year are submitted to the Annual Planning Database. Agents are given flexibility in the 12 months that they plan, i.e., many 4-H Agents who implement school-based programs plan according to the school calendar. Plans are reviewed by the Regional Program Leaders who may return plans electronically with coaching comments. Regional Program Leaders complete the program development rubric of the performance appraisal document.

December 1: Impact statements for the current year are due in the Impact Statement Database (which is part of the MIS that captures monthly contacts and funding codes). The Extension Agent performance appraisal document (with attachments) is due to the County Director who conducts the formal performance appraisal for agents in his or her county.

January/February: County Extension Directors meet with the Regional Director and Program Leaders to finalize staff performance ratings and for his or her own performance review.

Evaluate: Having performance appraisal to reflect both the planning and implementation functions has improved the depth and quality of Extension’s program evaluation, thus impact statements. Extension Agents frequently state that this new annual approach allows them to respond more proactively to timely issues, and be recognized for that appropriate response in the performance appraisal system.

Steps to Greater Success:

A committee has been worked since April 2004 to further review the planning and reporting system with the hopes of further integrating monthly reporting (such as contacts) with the annual planning system. The group developed a scorecard based on needs for a reporting system, and to date has reviewed 11 different state Extension Reporting Systems.

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