

research in brief

Needs Assessment Technique

Successful Extension programs begin with accurate local needs assessments. Many techniques are used including person-to-person contact, special interest group meetings, program evaluation forms, leader training meetings, and newsletter surveys.

Reid Ostrander, Extension agent, Roanoke County, Virginia, and fellow staff members recently tapped an ever-flowing fountain of information about their clientele—media community service information surveys. At some time, all of us have noted the annual pleas from radio and television stations for information on community needs. Thousands of citizens do respond.

These surveys contain a wealth of information and are open for "public inspection during regular business hours." With a minimal time investment, Extension staff can acquire valuable information for program planning and evaluation.

For example, the 1978-1979 Roanoke area survey revealed the following major areas of need: the economy, the energy crisis, consumer issues, quality of life issues (health, housing, and community improvement), minority needs, and governmental issues. What a tremendous source of information for all of us in Extension.

"Media Survey: An Easy, Effective, and Available Needs Assessment Technique." Reid Ostrander. Blacksburg: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Agricultural Economics Department, 1979.

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