

# expanding urban programming

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Recent legislation and expanded interpretations of the original Morrill Act of 1862 and Smith-Lever Act of 1914 have extended educational services to urban areas and their populations. As Extension increases its organizational and programmatic services to urban areas, certain modifications in Extension organizational operations are needed.

## **Programmatic Processes**

In both rural and urban areas, the ECOP Extension Program Development Framework<sup>1</sup> is the foundation on which Extension educational programs are established and organizational objectives achieved. Essential to the implementation of this framework are six major processes:<sup>2</sup>

1. Developing the institutional framework.
2. Developing the organizational base.
3. Program determination—the Extension program.
4. Program strategy—annual plan of work.
5. Program action—implementation.
6. Program evaluation—accomplishments.

Implementation of these six programmatic processes in urban areas by Extension appears to be significantly affected by specific historical, technological, economic, and environmental factors.

## *Historical Factors*

Historically, the Cooperative Extension Service was known as the Agricultural Extension Service and focused its operations and programming in rural areas. Because of this background and rural image, at the present time, many urban residents appear to be either unaware of Extension, or don't associate its programs and services with the urban community. Extension in urban areas needs to develop both an effective public information program to increase its organizational visibility

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and should conduct high profile program demonstrations that will increase its organizational credibility.

*Technological  
Factors*

Technologically, the rural Extension staff and educational programs use relevant research and expertise from the United States Department of Agriculture, land-grant universities, and experiment stations—which are heavily agricultural and rural-oriented. Extension staff operating in urban areas don't have access to a comparable research and expertise base for their educational programs. Arrangements and agreements need to be made by Extension staff in urban areas with universities and colleges and governmental agencies to provide the research and expertise base for Extension programs and operations in the city.

*Economic  
Factors*

Economically, many cities with populations of 500,000 or more residents are experiencing serious budget difficulties because of a declining and changing population base and decreasing sources of revenue for public services. Extension, with its dependence on local matching funds, may encounter increasing resistance in securing these funds from urban governments faced with serious budget deficits and declining sources of revenue. For Extension to grow in large urban areas, it must establish its visibility and credibility as an essential educational service with the city government officials or find alternative sources of funding.

*Environmental  
Factors*

The urban environment differs significantly from the rural area in a number of important dimensions<sup>3</sup> affecting Extension operations:

1. An increased density of population.
2. Greater population heterogeneity.
3. Enlarged magnitude and scale of social problems.
4. Increased number of competing groups and organizations.
5. Multiple power structures.

The *increased density of populations* in urban areas dramatically changes the Extension staff-client ratio and expands the potential audiences to be served per staff member. The Extension administration and staff must make a realistic assessment, based on available organizational resources, of the urban audiences they can best serve, and the types of educational strategies and techniques that are most effective and cost-efficient in reaching these larger potential audiences.

*Greater population heterogeneity* in the urban areas results in the Extension staff having to serve a much more diverse audience than in rural areas. This audience diversity includes differences in race, culture, language, ethnic background, age levels, sex, marital status, family types, income level, occupational backgrounds, and educational achievement. Programming access to, and effective communication with, these different groups requires that Extension employ a larger staff with more diversified backgrounds, training, and experience. More in-service training is needed to help Extension staff communicate more effectively with these different groups.

The *enlarged magnitude and scale of social problems* such as poverty, health, and housing encountered in the urban area make it unlikely that Extension, operating independently, can solve these problems. Therefore, the urban situation requires that Extension work closely with other organizations and groups in resolving these social problems.

The *larger number of groups and organizations* in the urban area also increases the possibility that Extension will encounter interorganizational competition and conflict in trying to provide educational services. This problem is increased by the recent expansion of Extension programs in urban areas and the lack of understanding by these other organizations of Extension's mission and role. Effective Extension policies and skills in developing and maintaining effective inter-organizational relationships become a necessity if Extension is to be both effective in its educational role and maintain its identity and integrity.

The *multiple power structures*<sup>4</sup> that are found more frequently in urban areas make the legitimation of Extension's role and programs more difficult than in rural areas. Not only are there numerically more power groups that Extension must interact with in the urban area, but these groups are also ideologically more diverse than in the rural areas. There's also the greater likelihood that these groups aren't familiar with Extension as an organization. Extension staff need to be aware of the different relevant power structures in the urban community and have the skills to develop appropriate cooperative and reciprocal relationships with their leaders.

## **Summary**

We have reviewed the different factors that appear to differentiate Extension programming in urban areas from the rural setting. These factors include historical background, technological research base, availability of economic resources, increased density of population, greater population heterogeneity, enlarged scale and magnitude of social problems,

increased number of competing groups and organizations, and multiple power structures.

Based on our Extension experiences and our evaluation of the different factors differentiating the urban area from the rural communities, I believe that the basic Extension philosophy, organizational structure, and program development process are highly applicable to the urban areas in this country.

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**The decade of the 1980s offers Extension the opportunity of greatly expanding its educational role and reaching additional millions of residents in urban areas with an educational process and knowledge that has been developed through a 65-year history of community and university participation and national, state, and local cooperation.**

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## **Recommendations**

The basic recommendation to expanding urban programming would be the provision of an adequate organizational resource and research base. Without sufficient staff and material resources and a relevant research base, the Extension Service in urban areas will have to struggle to simply survive and maintain its organizational presence.

Large metropolitan areas, because of their geographical size and population density and heterogeneity, need to be viewed from a state perspective and divided into smaller geographical units comparable to counties. Therefore, a large metropolitan area may have four, six, or more subdivisions comparable to counties in a state.

Extension staff are then assigned and preferably housed in these urban subdivisions so they can become familiar with the physical and demographic characteristics of these sections of the cities. This decentralization will help Extension planning and programming become more personalized and relevant for the residents in these different urban subcommunities.

There's the need for a central metropolitan Extension office with administrative and support staff to provide overall planning, coordination, and support services to the smaller field offices. An important support service at the central metropolitan office would be the public information component that would handle the use of mass media to reach the larger audiences in the urban area.

Another significant support service would be a volunteer office that would help in identifying, recruiting, and training Extension volunteers to reach the larger and more diverse

audiences in the cities. An interagency information and referral support staff person would be valuable in helping Extension become aware of the many different organizations and groups in the city and to facilitate cooperation with these groups when applicable.

Because of the potential public demand for large quantities of informational brochures and materials in urban areas, a well-organized publications and resource distribution center is an important support service.

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### Footnotes

1. Roger L. Lawrence, "Extension Program Development" (Ames: Iowa State University, Cooperative Extension Service, 1974).
2. *Ibid.*
3. L. Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *American Journal of Sociology*, XLIV (July, 1938), 3-24.
4. Terry N. Clark, "Some Trends in Community Politics: A Secondary Analysis of Power Structure Data from 166 Communities," *Social Science Quarterly*, XLVIII (December, 1967), 373-81.