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RURAL DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES:  
PENNSYLVANIA'S TITLE V EXPERIENCE\*

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Introduction

With the passage of the Rural Development Act of 1972 (Public Law 92-419), every state in the nation was challenged to provide rural development assistance through the land-grant universities. Operating under flexible guidelines, each state has proceeded differently. Comparison of various states' programs provides some new insights on effective rural development programming.

In addition to providing insights about effective rural development, the examination of these programs reveals the land-grant system's response to a challenge. Legislators are increasingly questioning whether the land-grant system has the capability to extend itself in meaningful ways to those citizens who support it. Increasingly other institutions of higher education seek access to the funding streams which have been limited to land-grant institutions. Many times, they desire to serve the same clients.

Another issue related to the Title V program is whether or not research and extension within the land-grant system can cooperate in a meaningful linkage to address the issues of rural communities. Questions specific to communities should be researched and answers provided in an understandable form.

In carrying out the Title V Research-Education Program in rural Pennsylvania, the emphasis has been on local people defining the priority issues. In this context, rural development is the process of improving the quality of life in rural communities--as quality of life is defined by residents of those communities. Such a grass roots orientation does not limit programming to a particular subject matter or discipline.

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Four specific aspects of the Pennsylvania Title V program will be highlighted in this article: 1) program focus; 2) advisory system; 3) research-extension coordination; and 4) involvement of other educational institutions and agencies.

#### Program Focus: Geographic or Problem Oriented

In 1972-1973 when the Rural Development Act of 1972 including Title V was initially being implemented, the Executive branch was intent on implementing a new federalism; that is, the decentralization of decision-making by government to the most local level. Thus, states, governors and their primary appointees, were to be intimately involved in the decisions regarding the law's implementation. Title V, as part of the total legislation, would be carried out by the land-grant universities, but its thrust would be determined in each of the 50 state houses.

Congress stated that the Executive's interpretation was contrary to Congressional intent, eventually passing an amendment which prohibited states from more than an advisory role in implementing the Rural Development Act of 1972. This Congressional-Executive struggle influenced Pennsylvania's implementing procedures; state agencies serving rural Pennsylvania became involved in early discussions with university faculty on the program's focus.

At the initiative of the Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, faculty within the Department began preparing background information to determine the program's direction. Available secondary data on Pennsylvania counties were analyzed; this information was used as a basis for discussions with staff members of state departments which have responsibilities for programs in rural communities. Eventually, these discussions involved the secretaries of state departments as well as members of the State Rural Development Committee, which added representatives from federal agencies serving rural communities.

The outcome of the meetings was the decision that the geographical area to be selected would be based upon two indices. These indices, measuring "need" and "potential" for development, would be most consistent with the overall goal for rural development within Pennsylvania: to reduce income inequities and raise the standard of living in the Commonwealth.

The index measuring "need" for development was labor participation; that is, the percent of the employable labor force that is actually employed. This index is defined as 100 times the ratio of the number of people working 27 weeks or more during the census year to the number of people in the county ages 17 to 64 who are not in schools or institutions [2]. Therefore,



$$100 \times \frac{\text{no. working 27+ weeks}}{\text{no. 17 to 64}} = \text{Labor Participation.}$$

To assess the "potential" to respond to development, an economic growth index was used. This index, reflecting the past economic growth of Pennsylvania counties, was based on three variables for each county: (a) change in value added by manufacturing, 1960 to 1970; (b) change in aggregate personal income, 1959 to 1969; and (c) change in market value of real estate, 1960 to 1970 [2]. Using objective indicators provided a rationale for identifying those counties which would be consistent with the legislation's intent.

In addition, some qualitative factors influenced the decision to identify specific counties. A multi-county area, all within one sub-state planning and development district, was sought. The receptivity of local officials, both elected and appointed, to such a program also influenced the decision. This process led to the recommendation that Indiana, Armstrong, and Butler counties, northeast of Pittsburgh in southwestern Pennsylvania, become the Title V target area.

#### Advisory System: State-College-Local

A State Rural Development Advisory Council was mandated by the legislation, with certain restrictions on whom should be included. The Advisory Council has played two major roles in the Pennsylvania Program: 1) legitimation and 2) review and approval of the State's Plan of Work.

To maintain the active involvement of members of such a Council from the program's definition through its implementation and evaluation, individual members need a continuing commitment to rural development and/or professional responsibilities in the area, whether they are professionals or citizens. Citizens will have a vested interest in such a program if they reside in areas in which the program is being carried out. Unfortunately, in Pennsylvania this situation did not exist during our initial three-year program, but the limitation will be overcome in future programming.

The inputs of professionals were significant in only one case, and it does illustrate the valuable contribution that can be made. The state director of the Farmers' Home Administration (FmHA) as an Advisory Council member committed FmHA to cooperation and coordination with the Title V Rural Development Program. The Director's commitment was communicated by him to both his state staff and staff within the target area. He even recommended to a local agency that it should work cooperatively with Title V personnel to better document a loan and grant request. As a result, local groups deliberately sought the involvement of Title V program personnel.

The Council has the capability to be more effective: it needs to be a voice for rural development as carried out by land-grant institutions. Presently, the land-grant system does not have a rural development constituency that can speak for its interests when legislation and other relevant activities are occurring in the public sector. The land-grant system needs that independent voice. Also, the Council can provide more direction to the rural development programs of the land-grant institution itself.

The State Rural Development Committee, created by memorandum of the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA, has no mandated role in Title V's implementation. However, this Committee within Pennsylvania, because it involves federal as well as state agencies serving rural communities, has provided a coordinating and legitimizing function. They held one of their state meetings in the target area soon after the program began, thereby introducing and legitimizing the Title V program to local personnel of member agencies and local officials. This meeting provided an excellent introduction to the community. The State Rural Development Committee plans to hold another meeting in the same target area during the fall of 1977, which will provide an opportunity to show what has been accomplished during the three-year program and to kick off new programs in the two additional counties into which Title V is moving.

The advisory system within the University has two parts: a College of Agriculture advisory council and a departmental council within Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. As coordinator for the Title V program, the Dean of the College of Agriculture works with a College Advisory Council, which includes the major administrators with interests that pertain to Title V. The membership of this council includes the Associate and Assistant Directors of the Experiment Station, the Associate and Assistant Directors of the Extension Service, the Extension Community Resource Development Program Leader, the Department Head of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, and the Title V Program Leader.

This group began informally, originally meeting to facilitate understanding of the regulations. A common interpretation of the program's operating procedures evolved. The group has continued to function with excellent participation. It meets on call, about four times annually.

The functions of the College Advisory Council are to:

- Set policy,
- Give direct and/or subtle support to the program,
- Provide individual contacts for the Program Leader with both research and extension functions, and
- Provide further integration of the research-extension functions for the program.

Within the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, an ad hoc committee was set up at the program's initiation to help develop and give direction to the program. Inputs have continued to be made by this committee, most recently in the development of the Plan of Work for the next program segment. Its role has been to exchange ideas and share information. Those who are actively involved in Title V or have an interest in the work come together to discuss the program to maintain an overview of it. This ad hoc committee, undoubtedly, could contribute more if it were (1) not ad hoc and (2) not limited to just Title V rural development activities within the department.

At the local level, Title V personnel began in each of the three target counties by working with the local Extension committees or associations. In the county where programming has been most intensive, a leadership development committee of the County Extension Association also existed. This committee had as its priority the development and implementation of a rural leadership training program. Title V personnel became immediately involved in leadership training on entering the county and they continued to work with this committee and on this training for the initial two years of Title V.

This committee, however, chose not to assume a continuing advisory role to Title V since it saw itself as having accomplished its purpose with the completion of the Leadership Training Program. Therefore, Title V staff decided to establish a group called Community Development Advisors. The five persons selected came from various parts of the county and from diverse occupations, but each has had some critical yet distinctive involvement with the Title V program. The program continues to be linked to the County Extension Association through the President of the Association who is also a Community Development Advisor. This group was formed to give direction to the program particularly as requests for services became greater than time available to respond. It has also given credibility to the program, forming a constituency at the local level for rural development.

Members of advisory committees represent many different perspectives, involving those who carry out and/or support the program as well as community residents who are to benefit from it. Having advisory committees at various levels enhances the diversity of program inputs and helps to keep people informed.

#### Research-Extension Coordination

Because of the importance of research-extension integration to public officials who authorized Title V initially, administrative procedures must assure that such coordination occurs. Land-grant universities no longer can do "business as usual". This integration in Pennsylvania was facilitated when the Title V Coordinator (Dean, College of Agriculture), who is responsible for both research and extension, designated a



Title V Project Leader to be responsible for both research and extension components of the program. In addition, the actual community program was linked effectively to the base institution, Penn State, through the academic appointment of field personnel. Given this system there are three primary ways in which research-extension programming have been joined.

The first approach was most common. The Community Development Specialist located in the field suggested research related to local issues. While these questions were in terms of a specific community, such work usually provided answers that applied in other rural communities. Specific projects included health, water and sewage systems, public assistance, and local government. This approach is based on the initiative of the field specialist.

The second way in which research supplemented the extension program occurred when the assistance of the Community Development Specialist was sought by a researcher at Penn State to carry out applied research. This situation occurred in the Title V program when surveys of health practices and attitudes were conducted in Armstrong, Butler, and Indiana counties. Concerns of health-related agencies and Extension staff were solicited before questionnaires were developed. The survey information was used to develop local health education programs and to document the need for additional primary health care. For example, facts from these surveys were used in planning a medical center which is now operating.

The final approach occurred when the field specialist, operating in both the research and extension modes, carried out surveys of local audiences to determine interest for specific programs. For example, a survey was done in the spring of 1976 to determine the interest of local producers in setting up a farm market in one county. Because of the interest shown, the farm market was organized and began operating in the summer of 1976. Surveys of local government officials were also carried out to determine educational interests and needs.

To carry out an integrative research-extension program, the input of field staff is crucial. Such staff act as facilitators both for local groups as they define their informational needs and for the researcher who seeks to make research applicable to rural communities. Being located at the county level rather than serving a larger geographical area provided better accessibility to the program by local people and allowed quicker and more direct responses. The field specialist not only brings expertise but provides access to additional capabilities available through the land-grant university [1]. In the Pennsylvania Title V program, the linkage of research and extension was facilitated by a research-extension specialist employed by the program who responded to field requests, and several other faculty who provided support. Knowing such backup is available is important.



Research and extension can be effectively linked at the program level if 1) funds for both functions are the responsibility of one individual, 2) the field specialist can operate both as an educator and as a researcher, and 3) specific backup research-extension personnel are available.

#### Utilizing Other Resources: Educational Institutions and Agencies

One of the other challenges of implementing the Title V program was to involve the total land-grant institution as well as other institutions of higher education within the state. In Pennsylvania, resources outside of the College of Agriculture were tapped but only to a limited extent. These cooperative efforts occurred at the initiative of the Project Leader, the Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, or an interested faculty member.

Institutional constraints hampered efforts to involve others across college lines. For faculty who are not members of the College of Agriculture, the Extension-Continuing Education function is usually not defined as education but as public service and thus is normally not part of a faculty member's regular load. Such faculty often seek pay to underwrite their salaries and thus legitimize their participation. Even if a research interest is pursued, similar salary support is sought to provide release time from teaching for the research being undertaken. Thus, costs are often considerably greater when resources outside the College of Agriculture are used. To maximize limited program resources, expertise was identified and utilized whenever possible within the College.

Through a Memorandum of Agreement, another state educational institution has been involved in program efforts. This memorandum provided a convenient umbrella under which to initiate an array of cooperative programs. Under this agreement, the cooperating university can carry out either research or extension programming consistent with the approved Title V Plan of Work.

Working relationships between personnel of the two universities were slow to mature. However, when specific issues were focused on and faculty with that expertise were identified, the association was productive. The political science department has had the most inputs, including issues such as water, housing, and local government. The chair of the department serves as the institution's Title V liaison officer and also as director of the university's Center for Community Affairs which facilitates access to other faculty.

Over three-years, the Title V program has cooperated with more than 60 agencies at the local, regional, state, and federal levels. These can be illustrated by naming a few: at the county level, Family Planning Services and the Rural Transportation Alliance; regional, Health Systems Agency of Southwestern Pennsylvania; state, Department of Community

Affairs and the Office of State Planning and Development; federal, Farmers' Home Administration and the Appalachian Regional Commission.

The greatest interaction has occurred with agencies at the local level. The program philosophy has been to keep involvement and cooperation as close to the community as feasible. Local groups and their priorities are most important. However, expectations of local organizations must be raised cautiously particularly as they seek external assistance in carrying out their community priorities, for external resources may not develop as rapidly as the local organization anticipates.

Agency cooperation must be nurtured so that each feels it is making a contribution rather than being in competition with one another. Local organizations working together must keep informed on one another's activities so that they can anticipate the program ahead. At the same time, they must keep those external groups from whom they are seeking inputs informed so that requests can be anticipated and accommodated.

As priorities are achieved, credit needs to reside primarily with the local group so that these persons maintain their spirit and sense of accomplishment. In this way, increased interaction can occur between local agencies, thus avoiding program duplication.

With Title V assistance, a primary health care center has opened, loan and grant funds approved to renovate a water system, a farmers market established, educational programs in leadership development, board member training and local government concerns have been conducted. These are only a few of the tangible outcomes in which Title V personnel have been involved in the three-county area.

#### Program Overview

As the initial three-year Plan of Work for Title V is completed, Pennsylvania Title V personnel feel that on-the-whole the program has been successful. At the local level, Title V personnel have been viewed as an objective non-biased, third-party, source of information. Having access to backup resources external to the community which often do not exist locally means rural communities have more and better information on which to base their decisions.

The one county in which Title V was most active is beginning to underwrite the cost of a continuing Extension position in Community Development through county resources. This position will provide program continuity and permanence. In the next three-year Title V program, two additional rural Pennsylvania counties have been chosen for programming. Continuing a grass roots orientation provides an opportunity to further strengthen integrated research-extension rural development programming between the land-grant university and rural communities. A pilot effort

such as Title V has provided the opportunity to consider alternatives and try different strategies. Perhaps these lessons will be useful for other states in their rural development efforts and in meeting the challenges of Congress.

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