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DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTION OF A PUBLIC POLICY EDUCATION PROGRAM

Doing the Job

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I would like to develop my assignment, doing the job, on the basis of four steps: (1) objectives, (2) situation analysis, (3) program concentration, and (4) program implementation.

OBJECTIVES

The over-all objective is to increase people's awareness, understanding, and ability to make decisions concerning a specific issue. However, here are three more for the specialist himself: (1) take leadership in developing a team approach, (2) extend the public policy program beyond domestic agricultural policy, and (3) consult with key decision makers.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The first step in building a successful public policy educational program is a situation analysis—a reading of the job to be done. This requires analysis of:

1. The present program. A specialist often finds himself in the middle of a legion of brush fires—the Cattlemen's Association wants him to talk on the imports of beef, a Rotary Club on the European Common Market, or a regional PTA council on job opportunities. If so, he should ask himself whether he is reaching enough consumers with the right product of a desired quality to justify his position. If not, he can proceed systematically in developing an effective program.
2. Program development procedures. The mechanism through which program direction is relayed may range from a formal well-disciplined one to a very informal one. Our job is to identify the mechanism and then use it to strengthen our program.
3. Role of the specialist. The specialist finds himself wearing three hats. First, he wears the hat of an expert in a particular area (e.g., taxes). Second, he is often called on to put on another hat and become directly involved in program planning. While wearing the first two hats, he develops relationships with key

people which make it necessary for him to wear the third hat—that of an organizer.

Are these hats compatible? Does the specialist wear a different hat when he gives a 20 minute speech to the Rotary, conducts a two-hour seminar with the Agricultural Advisory Committee, or engages in a depth training program? All three should have the same purpose—achieving objectives of his program. These objectives may involve any one of three stages—awareness, understanding, and decision making, or identification, recruitment, and involvement of participants to implement a coordinated program effort.

PROGRAM CONCENTRATION

For a small staff, attention needs to be centered around the familiar but important theme of setting priorities and program concentration—getting the package down to a manageable size—through:

1. Training to get the job done. The entire extension staff should be provided enough information to understand the subject matter involved. This enhances our program. In addition, machinery must be set up to give the specialist himself in-service training.
2. Testing for future program emphasis. In addition to testing ideas, methods, and issues identified with current problems, the specialist must be an innovator, testing a limited program that is not in his plan of work.
3. Determining program emphasis. Effective public policy programs must be developed before policy issues become headlines. Program priorities should not be determined by specialist capabilities.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The “who” involved in program implementation can be classed into four general categories: (1) people involved in program planning, (2) people involved in training, (3) people involved in providing resources, and (4) the extension clientele.

The profile of the community represented by the program planning group is changing rapidly. Public policy specialists should involve the right kind of people in program planning. People involved in program development more readily respect and help implement program priorities they themselves establish.

The second “who” is the extension staff itself. Public policy education cannot contribute effectively to the over-all extension program unless the entire staff (supervisors, specialists, and agents) has a working understanding of public policy and its educational objectives.

The list of available resource people (in the third category) is becoming longer and more dynamic as the character of our clientele changes. Each of us, together with the entire extension staff, needs to take time to list the groups of people providing these resources, to identify the contact person, and to determine their relative value to our program.

The last category of “who”—the extension clientele—must be satisfied with our product if we expect them to “buy” it.

Here are some clientele procedures that small specialist staffs are using successfully:

1. Actively develop a public policy clientele, identify them as extension clientele (participants in an extension effort in public policy), and identify issues that relate to their local self-interest.
2. Structure this clientele to intermingle biases, special interests, and competencies (farm and nonfarm).
3. Use appropriate methods for different groups. A study-discussion program may be suitable for one group while a depth-training formal seminar may be required for another group.
4. Use every opportunity to act as a consultant to key leaders in the legislature, farm organizations, advisory groups, etc.

The small staff has the opportunity to use different methods in implementing the program. Judgment and experience will dictate the appropriate method for the issue and clientele involved.