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Realizing Your Potential as an Agricultural Economist in Extension

Proceedings of the
American Agricultural Economics Association
Extension Workshop (1st : 1984 : Cornell University)

August 3-4, 1984

Cornell University
Ithaca, New York

Editor: Gerald R. Campbell

Technical Editor: Marsha Cannon

Produced at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Additional funding provided by Agriculture-Agribusiness Program,
Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Service, University of Wisconsin-Extension.



LEADERSHIP EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Staff Development Program

INFORMATION SHEET

LEAP is a 3 year professional staff development plan for extension workers employed by the Illinois Cooperative Extension Service. It is planned and conducted by Harold D. Guither and David Chicoine, Extension Economists in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Purpose

This staff development program is designed to:

1. Provide long range professional development and advancement for those participating.
2. Broaden the participants' perspectives as a citizen and professional educator.
3. Lead to more effective extension programs in public policy and public affairs.
4. Combine travel with study and new learning experiences.
5. Give opportunity for graduate credit for those interested.
6. Enlarge the scope of policy education to all phases of extension work.

Eligibility

All professional extension staff are eligible to enroll: county staff in agriculture, home economics, youth and community resource development, area advisers, subject matter specialists.

The Program Plan

1st Year

Seminars on community and state issues, state and local government, taxes, land use and related issues.

Understanding the process of public decision making.

Two day seminar in Springfield to meet with state government officials and legislators.

2nd Year

Understanding national issues that affect producers, agribusiness, consumers and rural communities: agriculture, food, marketing, health, taxes, credit.

One week seminar in Washington, D.C.

3rd Year

Understanding international dimensions of agriculture and family living: trade, balance of payments, exchange rates, cultural differences between nations.

Two to three weeks study tour to one or more foreign countries (subject to securing adequate funding).

Time Requirements

The program fits into present time allowances for staff development. The first year program involved four, two-hour TeleNet seminars; one-half day session at the Annual Extension Conference; and two days in Springfield. The second year will involve a one week travel; one-half day at the annual conference; and three, two-hour TeleNet seminars. The third year will involve two and a half weeks travel; one-half day at the annual conference; and four, two-hour TeleNet seminars.

Program Schedule

The program began in September 1983. The first class of 40 extension staff included county agricultural, home economics advisers, and a youth adviser, a county CRD-housing adviser, area advisers, and state specialists. The participants represent all major disciplines and programs of the extension service.

In the planning stages, it was decided that 40 should be a maximum number. The number of applicants by the deadline was exactly at this number. If more had applied, preference would have been given to those with 3 to 15 years of experience, dedicated to extension work as a career, and with interest in development of public affairs and public policy programs.

Acceptance

Evaluation of the first year's program shows widespread acceptance by participants. A number of extension staff who did not apply have indicated interest in applying for the second class. Such interest will probably lead to beginning a second class in the fall of 1985 or 1986.

Results

Reports of participants show an increasing interest in and development of extension programs in public policy issues and public affairs programs.