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OHIO'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SEMINARS

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The question of what is community resource development (CRD) and what is extension's role was debated during the sixties. The debate has been resolved and is fading with the decade. The seventies will plunge us headlong into the task of accepting the responsibility for structuring and conducting effective CRD extension programs. Indications of the shifting emphasis and the present state of CRD are the general acceptance of the ECOP Report on Community Resource Development in early 1968; the November 1968 Report of the Joint USDA-NASULGC Study Committee on Cooperative Extension, "A People and a Spirit," which called for a near tripling of the CRD program by 1975; the North Central Extension Directors' recent establishment of a regional CRD committee; ECOP's appointment of a national task force on curriculum and training needs in CRD; and the formation of the Community Development Society, which will meet annually and publish a journal semiannually.

The point is that the field which has come to be known as community resource development has gained acceptance, it is respected, and it is becoming professionalized. It is now up to us to deliver an educational program worthy of this respect. This is our challenge, as we enter the seventies. One of the alternatives—the community development seminar—is the focal point of the paper.

In brief, our community development seminars are two-day or twelve-hour educational programs for 50 to 70 key community leaders. The seminars are generally held on a county-wide basis and they attempt to deal with the fundamental problems of the community. Both university and nonuniversity personnel serve as resource people, and follow-up educational assistance after the seminar is part of the program.

It appeared to us in the fall of 1966 that the seminar approach was *our* best alternative for delivering an effective CRD program. This was a time when we were attempting to expand our CRD program from the 28 Appalachian counties of Ohio to all 88 counties, and we were attempting to marshal resources on our state staff to provide more back-up for our county staff and area agents in CRD.

OBJECTIVES

Given the above situation and an enthusiasm for CRD that was not particularly overwhelming, we wanted a program:

1. That could be packaged in such a way as to give it visibility.
2. That if successful in four or five pilot counties, would be requested by agents and could be delivered in other counties.
3. That would provide good in-service training for our staff—county, area, and state.

These were our program-building objectives. Our educational objective is to improve the ability of community leaders to make community decisions that will lead to increased economic opportunities and better quality of living for the citizens of the community. Improving understanding of the community decision-making process, providing technical information regarding wise resource use, and providing motivation are the means for accomplishing the educational objective.

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING THE SEMINAR

When an agent indicates an interest in having a seminar, his CRD area agent and a state specialist sit down with him, and preferably the total county extension staff, to discuss the purpose of the seminar, the agent's responsibilities, and the need for a local seminar steering committee and its function.

The county staff then selects a local steering committee of 8 to 12 people. These people should be able to reflect the thinking of the community and should also be able to influence other leaders to attend. Typically, the committees have been comprised of a county commissioner, banker, Chamber representative, industrialist, mayor, newspaper editor, and other leading citizens. Their job is to decide if a seminar should be held, and if so, what topics should be discussed and who should be invited.

Usually, about 125 are invited to the seminar and half or more attend; hence, our audience is composed of at least half of the top 125 community leaders in the county.

With the aid of the local steering committee seminar topics relating to the major problems facing local leaders are selected. Those most frequently included have been: (1) past and present social and economic trends affecting development, (2) community goals and roadblocks, (3) community communications and cooperation, (4) leadership development, (5) comprehensive planning, (6) financing development, (7) modernizing local government, (8) industrialization, (9) vocational training, (10) sewer and water development, (11) solid waste disposal, (12) recreational

development, (13) zoning, and (14) the community school program. On the last afternoon participants generally break into four groups. Each focuses on a different problem and explores alternatives for resolving the problem. These are the key concerns of our readers. Another indication of their concerns is what participants at seminars held in 1967 and 1969 listed as major problems facing community leaders in their community:

Apathy, communications, cooperation, leadership	328
Industrial development	148
Education—vocational, technical, improved quality, etc.	148
Water	144
Pollution including solid waste	128
Taxation and financing	123
Planning	117
Sewage	116
Zoning	89
Recreational development	68
Roads and transportation	52
Housing	45
Health facilities	24

For the 31 seminars, 115 different individuals served as major resource persons one or more times. Of these, 17 were Cooperative Extension faculty, 8 were nonextension OSU faculty, 7 were from other universities, 26 were industrial, financial, and economic consultants, 12 were from education and local governments, 19 were from state governments, 7 were from federal agencies, 13 were from planning commissions and agencies, and 6 were local community leaders. The nonextension personnel made nearly half of the presentations. In general they did quite a good job although they often did not discuss the issues within our usual policy decision-making framework.

EVALUATION

In terms of evaluation we can look to the statistics which show that the 31 two-day seminars were attended by more than 2,000 influential people comprising the major leadership in 36 counties with a total population of nearly two million people. And pre- and post-test scores showed about a 20 percent improvement in understanding.

Typical written comments at the close of each seminar were: "A continuation of this type of 'get-together' plus the discussion of community problems is absolutely necessary." "I feel the seminar was of great value to me and that there should be more; it also gave me a chance to hear the 'other side' of our problems, and to see that they might not be as difficult

to solve as we may have thought.” “I feel that all this should have been started long ago.” “I found out certain views I never knew existed.” And, “I think this was one of the finest things done in the county—first from an educational standpoint but secondly, the fact that it brought so many from all over the county together.”

Another comment that was rather common was, “It’s been a good two days, but it’s what happens in the next few months that counts.” It has been our contention from the beginning that follow-up to the seminars is extremely important, that the seminars would provide a base upon which to build, and that seminar follow-up should get top priority in our future CRD programs.

FOLLOW-UP

At the close of five of the most recent seminars we conducted a reputational survey to nominate members of a follow-up community development study committee. Each participant was asked to list five highly respected, broad-minded, unselfish community leaders who can cause things to happen and who he would like to see serve on a CD study committee. In another county this question was mailed to all who were invited to the seminar—surprisingly the response was about 85 percent. In another county, Jefferson, the original program steering committee met following the seminar and asked that the reputational survey be conducted through personal visits. The survey was conducted and an excellent committee was produced.

In Fairfield County the CD study committee which was chosen at the close of the seminar is given the major credit for getting the city and county together to solve their solid waste disposal problem and for initiating action that led to the establishment of a regional planning commission this fall. It is now studying the community school program. In Preble County the study committee is focusing on getting toll-free service between the thirteen exchanges in the county. To date, the phone companies have agreed to provide the service for a rate hike of twenty-five cents and they are now surveying their customers. In Hardin County seminar participants who took part in the watershed development session are working on a major watershed development project in the county. In Brown County a follow-up seminar is being held on providing quality education. As a result of the Wyandot seminar, leaders in Carey have formed an ad hoc committee to initiate a community school program. Several meetings have been held with residents of the community, and a group of leaders have made plans to visit Flint, Michigan, to study its community school program.

SUMMARY

The community development seminar is one approach to conducting

a CRD program. It can stimulate interest in development, create awareness of opportunities, and begin to explore the consequences of alternatives. It is an excellent training experience for extension staff and builds a base upon which to build a CRD program. Later as part of the ongoing program a seminar can be used effectively to increase public understanding relating to specific issues. We are convinced in Ohio that the seminar program has been an effective approach for moving our CRD program ahead.