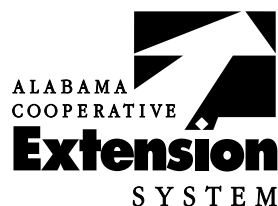


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GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING URBAN CENTERS AND EXPANDING AND ENHANCING URBAN PROGRAMS



Alabama Cooperative Extension System Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs

Revised May 2002

Guidelines for Establishing Urban Centers And Expanding and Enhancing Urban Programs

I. Introduction

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System, like other Extension systems across the nation, has worked as a publicly funded entity to provide quality programs to meet the needs of the people wherever they live. While services have always been available to citizens in rural, urban and suburban communities, in recent years the State has recognized the need and accepted the challenge to expand and enhance outreach to urban and nontraditional audiences. Urban Centers have been identified as a very workable program delivery mode in meeting this challenge.

II. Definitions

Urban Centers:

Urban Centers represent one of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's primary program delivery sources for urban programs. Urban Centers are System offices that are located in nine of the State's metropolitan areas as defined by U.S. Census data. Specifically, Centers are a component of the traditional Cooperative Extension County Office, with professional and support staff positioned to facilitate the state's focus on expanding and enhancing programs and services in urban affairs and nontraditional areas.

Implementing the Urban Centers concept will allow the System to effectively utilize existing resources, develop new resources, and establish itself as a vital catalyst for political, social and economic change for families, individuals and communities in urban environments. The Centers will serve as a primary source of support to county staff in urban areas in implementing comprehensive, research-based, interdisciplinary Extension outreach and educational programs targeted to specific mandated clientele.

Urban Programs:

Urban programs are those that are designed to have direct impact on family, environmental, social, economic and agricultural issues or affairs in densely populated areas. The urban Extension audience consists of people with needs unique to their environment. Urban Extension programs may utilize all Extension base program areas in addressing those needs, but more often may open new areas of work.

Nontraditional Programs:

Nontraditional programs are pioneering contemporary programs and practices that reflect unique and futuristic methods of design, construction, and implementation, which open new vistas for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and which expand the outreach of the System to more fully serve all the people of the State of Alabama. Such programs and practices most often may not fit within the categories of traditional Alabama Cooperative Extension System programs and audiences. However, such programs will involve new areas of interest, clientele, and delivery techniques within the System’s traditional base programs.

III. Target Audience

Designated Urban Center staff will operate outside the county boundaries to service the total metropolitan area. Alabama Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) are defined below:

MSA	COUNTIES IN MSAs	POPULATION (1995)
Birmingham	Jefferson, Blount, St. Clair, Shelby, Walker	853,431
Mobile	Mobile, Baldwin	492,464
Huntsville	Madison, Limestone	319,494
Montgomery	Autauga, Elmore, Montgomery	302,902
Tuscaloosa	Tuscaloosa	156,522
Decatur	Lawrence, Morgan	137,655
Dothan	Dale, Houston	134,663
Florence	Lauderdale, Colbert	129,161
Anniston/Gadsden	Calhoun, Etowah	212,903

VII. Reaching the Hard to Reach Through Safe and Effective Approaches

Both urban and rural communities within the State of Alabama are continuously growing and changing. The population is composed of very diverse audiences. Languages, folkways, life-styles and community environments are just as diverse as the people. Understanding this diversity is crucial to program effectiveness. Extension educators must adjust and adapt their programming content and delivery approaches to meet the needs of all of the people within the State.

The following are suggested as program delivery approaches that may enhance effectiveness in diverse, nontraditional environments.

- Establish and implement team teaching program models.
- Elicit support from community leaders and community volunteers.
- Utilize paraprofessionals and/or peer trainers where appropriate.
- Utilize train the trainer approaches.
- Study the community and be familiar with the population statistics and priority needs.
- Consider the diversity of the environment in program planning (language, cultural differences, needs, etc.).
- Learn from the experiences of others, but don’t pre-judge.

VIII. Reporting

Urban Center staff and System staff in general have the responsibility of maintaining accurate records of their urban contacts and their involvement in urban programming activities for reporting and accountability. Procedures for reporting work in urban programs and project ideas are clearly defined in the System’s Plan of Work and project sign-up. Agents and Specialists who sign-up for projects under Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs must report their contacts under the designated project number. Non-project related work with urban clientele should be reported under SMP numbers. Additionally, within all other base program areas and under each project number, Agents and Specialists will be able to and must report their urban contacts.

The remaining 25% of the agents' time can be committed to other county focused activities, projects and non-project work that addresses the needs of Extension audiences.

Realizing that existing projects and activities do not address all of the urban and nontraditional programming needs across the state, a major start-up activity for Urban Centers will involve conducting county assessments to help identify and prioritize county programming needs of urban and nontraditional audiences. Periodic assessments should be conducted to ensure that the Urban Center staff has a clear perspective on changing populations and changing needs in metropolitan areas. The Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit will provide support to county offices in this effort, including university faculty and staff from both Land Grant institutions as well as representation from other appropriate supporting agencies and organizations.

Data summaries from these assessments will facilitate county and state programming staff in making primary decisions about the programming focus and future urban program staffing needs within individual counties. The county assessments will also help the county and state programming staff to identify and prioritize specific community needs and to develop new and relevant programs and projects as Urban Center activities progress.

B. Other Programming Input and Output

1. State Specialists

State Specialists will provide professional expertise at the state level to assist with planning, implementing and evaluating issues-based programs in Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs as well as in all traditional base program areas. State Specialists are committed to working across the state using new and nontraditional approaches, as well as time honored delivery techniques to lend programming support based on their individual expertise, regardless of institutional affiliation. Specialists' support for urban and rural programs should be requested using the System's outlined procedures.

2. County Advisory Boards

As with rural programs, the Urban Center staff will seek input from the

CEC and DEC for the home office will provide leadership for evaluations of County Extension Agents with urban responsibilities with input from all CECs and DEC's within the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

D. Program Resources and Funding

The System will continue to rely upon local, state and federal funding for program implementation. Fiscal aspects of Urban Centers' operations will be handled through the System's Administrative Services Office following existing procedures for personnel and programming expenditures which were outlined in support of the unification.

The need for stronger advocates of urban programs has been recognized as a factor in building funding support. The Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit will work to build new and stronger advocacy groups and program supporters. External funding, including municipalities and grants will be sought to expand and enhance programming efforts. Existing procedures involving CECs, DEC's and state level administrators in securing external funding will be continued.

Relative to programming resources and materials, the System will continue to make full use of resources available through the two Land Grant Universities (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University), other state supported institutions of higher learning, community partners, government agencies, computer networks, etc. Additionally, the Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Resource Laboratory, housed in the James I. Dawson Extension Building on the campus of Alabama A&M University, will function as a valuable resource for programming materials.

VI. Programming Focus

A. Program Planning

Urban Centers will begin functioning by implementing projects and program activities outlined under the System's new base program unit, "Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs." Naturally County Extension Agents with urban responsibilities are expected to support the activities of the Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit.

However, Agents may adapt and/or adopt any of the base program projects and activities to address urban clientele needs when appropriate. Likewise, Urban Unit projects and activities may be used to address rural clientele needs when appropriate. The Urban Unit has outlined a detailed Plan of Work including objectives and performance activities, to address the Unit's goals. Current State goals are outlined below. The Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit Plan of Work should be used by County Extension Agents with urban responsibilities in developing their individual work plan (PAF-4 Form) to account for that portion of their work not committed to Extension Team Projects.

STATE GOALS:

URBAN AFFAIRS AND NEW NONTRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

- Focus on urban youth development by providing social, economic, health, leadership, citizenship and volunteerism programs designed to empower urban youth to reach their fullest potential as positive and contributing members of a diverse society.
- Provide creative programs that offer solutions to bridging the digital divide, creating expanded access to technology and independent systems of information retrieval to help all Alabamians succeed in the Information Age.
- Promote nontraditional agricultural and environmental sciences by providing information to help citizens make informed decisions on how to manage urban and suburban environments and explore new and alternative markets, niche crops, and diversified products.
- Conduct health and nutrition programs across an individual's life-span to improve the general health of Alabamians, focusing on underserved and high-risk audiences.
- Investigate the changing definitions and profiles of families and offer solutions to issues related to resource management, families in transition, parenting, senior life-styles, domestic violence, legal education, companionship and health care, to promote strong resilient families and communities.
- Increase the capacity of urban communities to respond to urban/rural interface issues through engaged partnerships, community building and diversity councils.
- Design and implement programs to improve the workforce preparedness of unemployed and underemployed citizens.

The Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit has identified several State major program priority areas (SMPs) and initiated several new specific Extension Team Projects (ETPs). Current project areas and specific team projects are listed below. Current priority areas and projects are described on-line under designated numbers.

State Major Projects (2002-2005)

- Urban Youth Initiative (SMP 19)
- Futuring, Technological Advancements and the Digital Divide (SMP 21)
- Nontraditional Agriculture (SMP 24)
- Nutrition and Health for Underserved Audiences (SMP 25)
- Urban Family Network (SMP 30)
- Urban-Rural Interface (SMP 31)
- Workforce and Economic Development (SMP 33)

Extension Team Projects (2002-2005)

- Forefronting Youth Initiative (ETP 19a)
- Tapping at Postsecondary Schools: Student Volunteers (TAPS) (ETP 19b)
- Integrated Approaches to Nontraditional Agriculture: Sustaining Animal Health and Alternative Animal Production Through Technology and Viable Partnerships (ETP 24a)
- Urban and Nontraditional Horticulture (ETP 24b)
- Metropolitan Health, Nutrition and Wellness (ETP 25a)
- Netkeys: Unlocking Resources for Urban Families (ETP 30a)
- Dogs as Companion Animals (ETP 30b)
- Diversity and Multicultural Affairs (ETP 31a)
- Workforce and Economic Development (ETP 33a)

County Extension Agents with urban responsibilities are expected to sign up for and report under any of these ETP projects. County Extension Agents with urban responsibilities can account for non-project related work under the Urban Unit's State Major Programs or SMPs. Sign-up under Urban ETP projects or Urban SMP priority areas should account for at least 75% of their Extension work. Procedures for sign-up and reporting are outlined on the System's home page for the "ACES Program Planning, Reporting, Evaluation, and Accountability Process."

creative thinking in their programming approaches. The majority of the work (75%) for County Extension Agents with urban responsibilities should focus on advancing programs and projects to support the mission and goals of the Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit. All base programming activities should promote cooperation and support among county staff. In addition to individual program assignments, counties should initiate some programs which involve the total staff in the planning, implementation and evaluation process.

Urban Center staff will be phased into the nine Urban Center locations beginning with the Madison, Montgomery, Lauderdale and Jefferson metropolitan areas. Staffing will be based on an adaptation of the System's staffing plan and on procedures outlined in the *Implementation Plan for Operation of Urban Centers Within the Alabama Cooperative Extension System*, and the *New Horizons: Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs* concept paper. Staffing procedures will include new hires, re-assignments and transfers to account for a minimum of 25% of the counties' FTEs being designated as Urban Center staff. Existing county staff members within urban counties are free to apply for Urban Center positions.

B. Program Effectiveness

The Associate Director, State Program Leader for Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs and other appropriate Urban Unit staff will communicate frequently with the CECs and DECAs and make site and program visits to insure that programming needs are being adequately addressed within a metropolitan area. The Associate Director and State Program Leader for Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs are free to make recommendations and to suggest necessary program assignments of Urban Center staff to support effective program delivery.

C. Supervision of Urban Center Personnel

Urban Center personnel will be supervised following the System's existing organization and reporting procedures. County Extension Agents with urban responsibilities and Urban Center support staff will report to the County Extension Coordinator in the designated County Office. However, because County Extension Agents with urban responsibilities work within more than one defined county area, the designated

County Advisory Board in program planning and evaluation processes and in defining prominent issues. In the System's concept paper "New Horizons: Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs" District and County Agent Coordinators with the System have been asked to provide support in reviewing County Advisory Board membership to insure that it reflects the population demographics of the county and contains adequate urban representation.

3. State Advisory Council

The System also has a State Advisory Council and an Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Advisory Council to give input to state-wide planning and evaluation.

C. Program Delivery

Appropriate state-of-the-art delivery modes, including technology-based methods that support effective educational programming approaches will continue to be used. County Extension Agents with urban responsibilities will be trained in techniques for addressing hard-to-reach audiences, as well as in approaches for reaching diverse audiences. Such program delivery modes will include the following:

1. Train the trainer programs
2. Peer training programs
3. Paraprofessional training programs
4. Team teaching and partnering with supporting agencies
5. Volunteers
6. Video-based, self instruction
7. Distance education
8. Urban/rural interdependent programs

The System continues to encourage team work and county efforts in delivering services to Alabama's citizens. County Extension Coordinators are expected to promote work environments and program delivery techniques where both urban and rural county staff work cooperatively to deliver services to all of the citizens of Alabama.

D. Partnerships

Program leaders and Urban Center program staff are expected to establish positive working relationships with appropriate agencies and indi-

viduals who are sensitive to meeting needs and addressing issues in rural and urban environments via learning partnerships. Community partners are defined as individuals or organizations working with others to accomplish a common goal with a shared sense of purpose and shared responsibility for the outcome. When people work together toward a common vision, resources are maximized.

Community partners will serve as a primary approach to delivering programs and identifying audiences within the Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit. County Agents, State Specialists and other programmatic staff will work under structured partnerships or collaborations to deliver programs at the county and state level. Minimum guidelines for establishing Urban Center partnerships are that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) be addressed to the CEC and kept on file. The MOU must state the specific goals and objectives of the partnership and the expectations of both parties (i.e. Extension and the partnering agency) as well as a projected time frame or duration of the partnership.

E. Program Marketing

The Associate Director for Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs will seek the support of the System's Marketing Team in developing and implementing a strong marketing program to gain internal and external support for programming efforts statewide. Additionally, if necessary, external marketing consultants will be engaged to develop a comprehensive marketing approach including printed materials (brochures, flyers, paraphernalia, etc.), print and electronic media, and community based organizations and institutions. As outlined in the System's urban concept paper, the marketing strategies will serve a four-fold purpose: 1) to educate Alabama's citizenry on the System's new and expanding outreach services, 2) to increase the System's internal preparedness to set goals, prioritize needs and understand the consequences of its actions for program effectiveness and accountability, 3) to facilitate collaboration and working relationships within urban communities, and 4) to build advocacy networks with agencies, organizations legislative bodies, etc. who are sensitive to the needs of urban audiences, and the need to develop alternative program delivery models for emerging and persistent community problems.

IV. Location

While partnerships with other agencies and organizations may provide access to other training space and facilities for implementing programs, Urban Center staff will be physically housed within System County Extension Offices. County Extension Offices in the ten metropolitan areas will provide the base office for Urban Centers and will represent the home office for Urban Center staff. County Extension Coordinators (CECs) and District Extension Coordinators (DECs) for the counties of Jefferson, Mobile, Montgomery, Madison, Tuscaloosa, Calhoun, Morgan, Houston, and Lauderdale have the responsibility of insuring that adequate space assignments are made within County Extension Offices to accommodate Urban Center professional and support staff.

V. Management and Supervision

A. Assigning Programming Responsibilities

The responsibility for implementing urban programs will rest primarily with the County Extension Agents with urban responsibilities. Hence, the academic background of these individuals will encompass more than the traditional Agricultural and Family and Consumer Sciences areas. Programming assignments will be made based on the expressed needs of urban clientele, and will focus on research-based and prioritized issues. Each Urban Center will have a programming focus that is unique to the needs of the clientele within the metropolitan area. Hence, programming focuses may differ for each of the nine Urban Centers.

A System job analysis, which describes the general job responsibilities of County Extension Agents with urban responsibilities, is on file in the State's Personnel and Staff Development Office. More specific program assignments for Urban Center staff will be determined on a county by county basis with input from the designated urban county's CEC, DEC and appropriate state staff including the Associate Director and the State Program Leader for Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs. Regardless of program assignment, program area or project focus, Urban Center staff has the responsibility for expanding and enhancing services to urban and nontraditional audiences. Their primary focus is to insure that the State's urban and nontraditional populations are served efficiently and effectively. Hence, there should be room for flexibility and