

Creating an excellent train-the-trainer experience

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Introduction & Purpose

Sharing an Extension program with colleagues from other states requires the same commitment to adult education principles that are used when training Extension participants. This poster highlights the lessons learned in customizing a train-the-trainer session for University based community development programs from six states.

Keys to the success of the program are found in the design of the training:

- understanding each state's extension structure,
- participant's understanding of an economic analysis tool (IMPLAN), how participants wanted to use the program upon return,
- involving them in the delivery of a program,
- allowing adequate reflection & planning time following the emergence experience.

Our evaluation method for these trainings included:

- end of session discussions;
- interviews with the training team;
- end of session evaluations;
- a follow-up survey of outcomes.

Our efforts focused on enhancing the capacity of our colleagues to allow them to build the capacity of leaders in their communities. We were successful in our efforts to train others, but in addition we learned a great deal that has led to program innovations.



Designing a Train-the-trainer experience

The effectiveness of this program is found in the following key design elements:

- Variety of learning experiences -- beyond PowerPoint to include interactive discussions and a community practicum
- Reciprocal sharing -- we built in time for participants to share their approaches to community economic development both with us and with the other participants.
- Collaborative atmosphere -- to foster continued sharing beyond our initial trainings, we intentionally designed social interactive activities.

Round 1: Training with Missouri Extension Staff

The training for three Missouri Extension staff began with a two-day training followed by an emergence experience with a Missouri county conducted by Brigid and Neil. We learned:

- Understanding how extension is structured in the state receiving the training is critical to coaching staff on how the program can be delivered (half the face-to-face training time involved learning each other's extension structure)
- While we had the Missouri economic data, we were not as familiar with the nuances between sectors of their economy. The Missouri staff acted as participants in the workshop. Active participation by the trainees also increase their understanding and appreciation of the program.

Round 2: Training with Five NE States

Building on the lessons from the Missouri training, we refined our program design for faculty from five Northeast states as follows:

- To understand the different roles faculty play in each state (i.e. extension structure), we held two pre-session webinars to learn about the approach to community development in each state, how Extension activities were structured, and how programs are funded.
- 1.5 day face-to-face training on the Economic Futures curriculum
- A 0.5 day emergence experience in an Economic Futures workshop in a Minnesota community. Brigid presented the community's economic data with faculty from the five states facilitating small group discussions with community members about the data. This direct interaction with community members showed the effectiveness of this program.
- Critique of the Economic Futures workshop by faculty from the five states. Other faculty actively critiqued suggestions for improvement Based on their comments, we have improved the materials shared and refined our presentation during the workshop.
- 0.5 day to:
 - Reflect on where and how the elements of the Economic Futures workshop could be integrated into their existing work.
 - Develop scholarship proposals based on current and future Economic Futures work
 - Faculty from each state sharing materials, approaches, tools, that compliment the Economic Futures work.

Lessons Learned from Round 1 to Round 2

We had the rare opportunity to conduct this training on two occasions. That opportunity allowed our team to reflect up on our approaches and make modifications between rounds 1 & 2. The table below summarizes our changes and our rationale for each:

Change	Rationale
Hold pre-training webinar to discuss Extension structure, resources, and approaches	A great deal of time was spent unexpectedly during round 1 discussing organization structure and approaches. This was a worthwhile discussion, but cost us valuable in-person time. Therefore, we chose to have this discussion via webinar
Do the demonstration on our home turf and immediately following training	Coordination of a community development program is much easier when utilizing existing connections and on going efforts. Additionally, doing a demonstration of the program immediately means the information is fresh for each participant. It also means that the participants can reflect with each other immediately following the demonstration.

Evaluation Approaches

In addition to an end of session evaluations and a follow up survey, we gained participant feedback following each session using a structured discussion method called ORID (Observe, Reflect, Interpret, Decision). The ORID process is not only a critical element in the design of the Economic Futures Workshop, but was also applied throughout the train-the-trainer face-to-face session. Faculty saw value in this shared evaluation method.

Our end of session evaluations were generally positive. From one participant, "this was one of the most rewarding extension workshops I have attended". Participants shared that the time for reflection was deeply valued. Second, our evaluation specialist interviewed our team about our reflections from each round. Through the probing questions, our team was able to capture the relevant lessons. Because the effort was multi-layered, it was difficult to describe. Discussing it with another person helped.