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# The Role of the Featured Program

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*With more demands to report state-level data, Extension is held accountable in offering programs that target and reach specific outcomes. Whether through a constant search for “programs of distinction”, “programs of impact” or simply “high-quality programs”, Federal agencies and other funders are seeking multiple ways of obtaining the largest return on their investments. Needless to say, with today’s budget constraints, the demands are placed upon states to meet the challenge.*

While individualized county-based information is vital to our organization and our reporting system, most of this data is localized, not always revealing the impact of statewide efforts. This is one reason why it is crucial that we obtain information from specialists and associates working on statewide initiatives. Featured Programs were introduced for this purpose nearly a decade ago to help represent the broad nature of Extension programming and to contribute toward the goal of showing accountability. Data gathered on Featured Programs are compiled to provide a state-wide snapshot of outcomes. When accompanied with data from impact statements and statistical reports, we are able to provide stronger evidence of the successes achieved by Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service’s educational efforts.

Each year, teams of agents and specialists are asked to come together to update or develop new logic models, identify outcomes and evaluations to appropriately collect data across the state for the identified Featured Programs. While this process gives specialists a chance to connect with real issues at the community level, it also gives agents a tangible way of accurately measuring outcomes of the Featured Programs. In addition, this process offers standardized methods for measurement and allows the Kentucky CES reporting system to aggregate data to reveal significant outcomes. Counties are responsible for answering questions for Featured Programs conducted during the current program year. Compiling this data from across the state further improves our ability to take wider strides toward measuring short, intermediate and long-term results. Furthermore, having the capacity to document statewide impact generated through our programs is valuable for reporting to our stakeholders.

Certain criteria are in place to provide specific details of what defines a Featured Program in Kentucky. When Featured Programs are to be submitted, Extension faculty and staff should consider the following:

- Each program area will determine 3 to 4 Featured Programs that will be used to showcase specific outcomes. These may not be the largest programs in the area (of 4-H, ANR, CED or FCS), but can be aggregated to show impact. These can be determined by reviewing feedback shared by

clientele or trends/issues identified by the research of specialists. Assistant Directors, along with the Program and Staff Development Director, will be responsible for determining the Featured Programs.

- Only those Featured Programs that can readily meet the needs of a broader (multi-county, regional, statewide) audience should be considered.
- A research-based curriculum that has been peer-reviewed and pilot tested is an essential component of a Featured Program.
- If a program area team is creating its own curriculum, teaching guide or toolkit, these materials should also be pilot tested before being used as a component of the Featured Program. This would help reveal whether a program is effective before it is presented to counties (Examples of questions used to determine effectiveness could include: Have participants demonstrated a change in knowledge, attitudes, behavior, etc.? Is there potential for social and economic impact on the community?).
- A logic model must accompany other materials assigned to the Featured Program.
- Evaluation assessment tools (surveys, interview questions, etc.) must also be provided for agents to use. These should also be peer-reviewed and pilot tested to make sure they are valid and accurately measuring desired outcomes. All evaluation tools should be easy to administer, having clear, precise instructions.

When incorporating the above listed criteria, Featured Programs reinforce our committed goal of providing high quality programs to our audience, helping Extension better communicate relevance across the state. Such practices also allow our system to be on one accord in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programs, in order to reach desired results through common methods. It is very difficult to determine our effectiveness when there is no consistency in determining what went well and what failed. The Featured Program development process, can in fact, present meaningful data that is useful to Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, as well as those who have consistently served as advocates in supporting our work. We must make sure they have the information necessary to continue this task.

Kentucky's Featured Programs are archived on the Program and Staff Development website. These reports can be viewed by going to the link below:

<https://warehouse.ca.uky.edu/AgWeb/pubreports/>

An example of the statewide and individual county reports can also be found at:

<https://warehouse.ca.uky.edu/Survey/PriorityIndicators/2010/Reports/Puform.asp>