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Program Instructional Profile (PIP): A User-Friendly Tool to Support Program Development and Implementation for Extension Professionals

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Abstract. Not all Extension professionals enter the workplace with knowledge and experience in program development. Some may possess extensive expertise in their subject matter but need additional training in teaching-related competencies for adult or youth audiences. Even educators with extensive skill and experience benefit from thoughtful and intentional program planning and implementation design. This article describes the Program Instructional Profile (PIP), created for Extension professionals to design and outline the program delivery processes. We explain how to use the PIP and provide insight into the benefits and challenges of the uses for program development and implementation purposes.

INTRODUCTION

Previous studies have identified program development and teaching strategies as essential skills for successful Extension agents (Cooper & Graham, 2001; Harder et al., 2010). However, it is not uncommon for Extension professionals to come to the organization without these skills (Benge et al., 2020; Ensle, 2005; Myers, 2011). Extension professionals continually identify teaching-related competencies for both adult and youth audiences as a professional development need (Berven et al., 2020; Conner et al., 2018; Diem, 2009).

This article aims to bring attention to a new tool that fills a program planning and professional development need in Extension: the Program Instructional Profile (PIP). This simple template can serve as a framework for designing workshops, sessions, and lessons while ensuring the content is delivered with a rigor that allows for measurable knowledge, attitude, and behavior change.

HOW IT WORKS

When Extension professionals develop programs, they need a clear understanding of why they are designing the program in a specific way, and they must be able to articulate the changes and outcomes that participants should experience as a result of program participation (Caffarella, 1994). The PIP is designed to remind Extension professionals of this critical assumption. It is formatted loosely in Microsoft Word, allowing for easy adaptation and utilization for individual program planning and development needs. The framework is transferable across all disciplines, which means this template can work in every Extension content area. The PIP can be shared with others facilitating the same or a similar program, leading to more synchronous delivery. The PIP is an open access Word document (see Appendix). Below is a summary explaining the components that are included in the PIP.

OVERALL PROGRAM GOAL

The PIP begins by reminding professionals to think through and record the overall program goal. It may include the long-term outcomes describing what society may look like in the future if the program is implemented and

participants make lifelong action changes. It may also include how participants' lives will differ after they take part in the Extension program.

DESCRIPTION OF IMPLEMENTATION

Extension professionals should choose implementation strategies that match the focus of the proposed outcomes and enhance the learning effort (Caffarella, 1994). The Description of Implementation component of the PIP allows the program designer to record the chosen program structure. For example, if a program involves procedures that take extensive time to explain and practice, the designer may prefer a longer period. Programs led primarily through virtual settings may be the best way to deliver the content.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

This section refers to the specific program's short- and medium-term outcomes. In other words, how will participants' knowledge, attitudes, and actions be different after completing the entire program? Kettner et al. (2017) have suggested writing outcome objectives that are clear, specific, measurable, time limited, realistic, and representative of commitment. When written correctly, the program outcomes link to the program evaluation plan. An example is provided in the PIP as a reminder.

AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND

Each individual brings their own ideas, biases, and experiences to their role in program development and implementation. Especially when working with audiences from different backgrounds, Extension professionals should think through how their views and positionality impact their programming decisions (Mahon et al., 2010). Acknowledging one's own experience and biases also informs the next facilitator, who may use the PIP as a reference for a future program.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Each audience also brings unique experiences and circumstances. Ideally, programs should draw on learners' previous experiences and have an immediate application (Knowles, 1980). The PIP includes an analysis of the specific audience for which a program will be delivered and a space to think through what those characteristics could mean for programming.

EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, MATERIALS, THEORIES, AND REFERENCES

Both practical and theoretical, the PIP asks the program developer to think through the materials and supplies necessary for program implementation. To promote the use of best practices in teaching and learning, the PIP also includes a section for documenting learning theories important for the program's development and implementation and a space to include additional references for the content.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background information allows for the inclusion of additional content information needed for program implementation. Are there resources or additional information that a facilitator might want to use or have available when implementing the program?

PROGRAM OUTLINE

The adaptable PIP template includes a place to outline the various parts of the program delivery, including the introduction, learning objectives, activities and assessments, transitions between sections, and the closure and review. The PIP includes a space to allocate time for each program section. Consider chunking content information into smaller pieces, or parts as labeled in the PIP, to enhance the likelihood that information will be retained by the participants (Miller, 1956). There is room in each PIP form for up to five parts. Because this template is in Microsoft Word, one can easily add additional parts if one's information is split into more. The descriptions in the program outline remind the author to include learning objectives and assessments for each part of the program, as well as time to reflect and evaluate before the program ends.

Program Instructional Profile

BENEFITS

The PIP template includes aspects of program development that are important for successful program delivery but often neglected in favor of technical content. Intentionally thinking through these aspects using the fillable PIP template has the following benefits:

- The PIP requires professionals to consider how they will evaluate learning objectives as part of the program delivery as they plan the program, while also linking those to outcomes or participant attitude, knowledge, and future action changes that should continue after the program concludes.
- The PIP provides an opportunity to think about how to align teaching with audience experience, knowledge, and skill levels. Additionally, if the professional is implementing the program with another audience, this template reminds them to reconsider the program delivery for the new audience, as no two audiences are the same or require the same teaching and learning strategies.
- The PIP provides a way to document the program in a specific, complete format, making the program easy to share with other professionals who may desire to deliver a similar program. It may also promote program stability, most notably when a professional departs the organization and is replaced by a new employee.

CONSIDERATIONS

Although the PIP includes essential components of the program development process, it still presents some challenges. Keep the following considerations in mind.

Quality program planning is a complex task that requires knowledge and skill. We recommend several texts to assist with understanding terminology and concepts. The text *Planning Programs for Adult Learners: A Practical Guide*, 4th edition (Daffron & Caffarella, 2021) may be a beneficial resource for novice planners. *Design Thinking for Training and Development* (Boller & Fletcher, 2020) emphasizes knowing one's audience before designing one's program. Franz et al. (2015) and Diaz et al. (2018) provide descriptions of Extension-specific program development models.

Program planning requires time and focus. Extension professionals may feel they do not have the hours to invest in filling out a template. However, using the PIP may save time in the long run and help ensure rigorous programming.

CONCLUSION

The PIP aims to assist Extension professionals in designing well-planned programs by gathering key program development components and placing them into one fillable template. It may be particularly beneficial for Extension professionals who have content knowledge but are new to program planning and development. The ultimate goal of this tool is to promote Extension programming across all disciplines that allows for measuring a change in knowledge, attitude, and behavior.

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