

Areas of Program Focus Module

PowerPoint Presenter's Notes

These notes are intended to be used as a general discussion outline and not as a script to be read.

Slide #1

Title slide

Slide #2

Development of areas of program focus is a way to make our already excellent agents even better at what they do. When we look at what qualities make up a truly great agent in K-State Research and Extension, we see two particular characteristics. First, that agent has proven him or herself to be highly proficient in our organization's eleven basic core competencies (for further reading, access "*Eleven Basic Core Competencies*" handout). Second, that person exhibits an expertise for which he or she is recognized within the community. That person goes beyond simply being a "generalist" and develops further knowledge in order to provide even better educational programming in a particular subject.

Slide #3

When we look at the eleven core competencies agents are responsible for developing in their professional lives, one stands out in relation to the recognized expertise demonstrated by great agents – subject matter. Being competent in a subject is defined as achieving a "mastery of a scientific discipline, body of research knowledge, or a technical proficiency that enhances individual and organizational effectiveness." Instead of being generalists, agents need to develop a more in-depth, specialized knowledge in a particular area – an area of program focus. By specializing in a specific area of program focus, agents will have a more significant impact than what is possible by being spread too thin and trying to cover all program areas equally.

<http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/boardleadership>

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

11/06

Slide #4

(Distribute the *K-State Research and Extension Areas of Program Focus* handout) Thirteen different areas of program focus have been identified for agents to choose from. They all fall within the four basic program areas.

Slide #5

Once an agent chooses an area of program focus in which he or she would like to develop further, the agent becomes part of a program focus team. Teams are made up of specialists and agents, and they serve four primary goals:

Awareness of issues/needs: Program focus teams are intended to increase awareness among agents and specialists of particular issues and needs that arise within each area of program focus.

Framework of knowledge, skills or abilities needed: Each team is also responsible for developing an appropriate framework that identifies the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for each area. This framework can help drive more focused professional development opportunities.

Self-assessment: All teams will develop appropriate tools and processes of self-assessment for agents to use in evaluating their performance within their chosen area. Such tools should aid agents in identifying holes in programming or areas where they need more support to provide the in-depth, quality education within an area.

Coursework, training, curriculum and in-service: Program focus teams are responsible for developing and undertaking coursework, training, curriculum

and in-services. The purpose is to support agents in continually developing their knowledge and expertise within the area of program focus, so they can provide current and cutting-edge information across Kansas.

Slide #6

Each extension board plays an important role in direction and support of agents' areas of program focus. Pages 10-11 of the "*Handbook for County Extension Councils and District Governing Bodies*" note that the responsibility of Extension Councils and Program Development Committees is to help identify community needs and support agents in developing programs to meet those needs.

If an agent has not yet selected an area of program focus, the board should aid that agent in determining what area or areas the individual feels most passionately about and would be the most willing to develop an expertise within. The board also should try to guide that agent in selecting an area that addresses one or more community needs identified by the board. The *County/District Extension Program Organization and Planning Chart* (distribute document) can guide identification of voids in county or district programming and assist in determining what areas of program focus would be best suited to fill such voids.

The board also is responsible for supporting each agent's professional development. For an agent to become truly competent within a particular area of program focus, he or she will need to consistently dedicate time to development of knowledge and skills in that area. The board should be prepared to provide necessary support, including financial support for resources or workshops as well as encouraging agents to seek out professional development opportunities.

Slide #7

To summarize, through development of an area of program focus, agents can develop a stronger expertise in a particular subject area and deliver better, more in-depth programming to Kansas citizens. As our already great agents become even better, we can achieve our goal of "... being the best in creating opportunities for positive improvement in personal lives, in businesses, and in communities all across the state."