

# Priority Competencies Needed by UF/IFAS Extension County Faculty<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

A competency is “a set of *observable* performance dimensions, including *individual* knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as *collective* team, process, and organizational capabilities, that are linked to *high performance*, and provide the organization with *sustainable competitive advantage*” (emphasis in original) (Athey & Orth, 1999, p. 216). The competency approach was originally developed by psychologist, David McClelland (1973). McClelland argued intelligence alone was not an accurate predictor of workplace success. The measurement of competencies was offered as a better way of assessing employee potential. McClelland’s (1998) competency approach was based on four major assumptions: (a) performance measures should be observable, (b) criteria should relate to life outcomes such as occupations and education, (c) competencies should be described and defined realistically, and (d) clearly articulated information on how to develop competencies should be made public. This publication is intended to define and describe the competencies needed by UF/IFAS Extension county faculty.

## Prioritizing Competencies

UF/IFAS Extension county faculty members perform a complex set of duties. The competency areas selected as priorities for UF/IFAS Extension have been commonly identified as important for Extension professionals in multiple research studies (Harder et al., 2010; Hibberd et al.,

2013; Scheer et al., 2011). There are ten priority competency areas for UF/IFAS Extension county faculty (see Table 1). Professionals should strive first to achieve excellence in the foundational competency areas of “Program Planning and Development”; “Extension Teaching, Tools, and Methods”; “Program Evaluation”; and “Subject Matter Expertise.” The other six supporting competency areas describe skills sets that enable Extension professionals to grow and maintain successful programming within local communities.

The specific competencies contained within each of these areas were adapted from Samuel (2014) and Stone and Rennekamp (2004) or were unique items developed by the author in collaboration with UF/IFAS Extension administrators. A complete listing of the competencies is available in the Appendix.

## Summary

Highly competent professionals are critical to the success of UF/IFAS Extension (Harder & Zelaya, 2015). This publication provided an overview of the competency areas in which current and aspiring UF/IFAS Extension professionals should proactively develop their expertise.

## References

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1. This document is AEC574, one of a series of the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date September 2015. Revised November 2024. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.
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## Appendix

### Priority Competency Areas and Specific Competencies Needed for Success by UF/IFAS Extension County Faculty

#### PROGRAM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Conduct a needs assessment of your county.
- Use the results of a needs assessment for planning.
- Conduct interviews to obtain information for planning.
- Consult professionals with knowledge and experience about planning educational activities.
- Assess available local/community resources.
- Develop long-term Extension program plans (extending beyond 2–3 years)
- Develop an annual plan of work.
- Develop weekly work schedule.
- Develop monthly work schedule.
- Develop short-term (knowledge, attitude, skills, aspirations) program objectives.
- Develop medium-term (behavior change) program objectives.
- Develop long-term (social, economic, environmental) program objectives.
- Translate needs assessment information into a situation statement.
- Establish programming priorities.
- Align program priorities at the local level with the Extension Roadmap.
- Organize an effective program advisory committee.
- Develop a logic model for a planned program.

#### EXTENSION TEACHING, TOOLS, AND METHODS

- Develop measurable educational objectives to guide your teaching.
- Develop instructional materials to be used for a teaching activity.
- Collect instructional materials to be used for a teaching activity.
- Apply teaching and learning principles.
- Select appropriate teaching methods to ensure clientele's understanding of subject.
- Explain technical terms to clientele in simple language.
- Use visual aids (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, or slides) as instructional tools.
- Lecture.
- Conduct workshops.
- Conduct field days (agriculture or horticulture agents only).
- Conduct individual consultations.
- Facilitate group discussion.
- Use online conferencing technologies to deliver content to clientele.

- Develop/adapt curriculum for delivery through social media (e.g., Facebook or Twitter).
- Develop/adapt curriculum for delivery through mobile phone/tablet applications.
- Modify instructional approach to the audience.
- Use demonstration sites as teaching tools (agriculture or horticulture agents only).

## PROGRAM EVALUATION

- Use quantitative data gathering techniques (e.g., Likert-item questionnaires and pre- and post-tests).
- Use qualitative data gathering techniques (e.g., interviews and focus groups).
- Establish measurable objectives for evaluating the success or failure of a program.
- Develop intended outcomes that relate to the measurable objectives.
- Monitor Extension program activities.
- Analyze findings from evaluation activities.
- Interpret findings from evaluation activities.
- Adjust programs based on evaluation data.
- Prepare reports on program outcomes using evaluation findings.
- Communicate evaluation information to stakeholders (e.g., clientele, government officials, and funding agencies).
- Align local impact data with UF/IFAS Extension Roadmap.

## SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTISE

- Identify source of clientele issues.
- Find UF/IFAS research to provide unbiased solution to the issue.
- Interpret UF/IFAS research for clientele.
- Implement an appropriate strategy to resolve the issue.
- Explain technical information in simple terms.
- Solve complex problems facing clientele.
- Participate in applied/adaptive research projects.
- Contribute to publication of program or research results in academic media/scholarly publications (e.g., *Journal of Extension*).
- Identify appropriate Extension specialists with whom to collaboratively address clientele needs.

## EXTENSION ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

- Uphold the mission of UF/IFAS Extension.
- Adhere to the policies of UF/IFAS Extension.
- Deliver programming that addresses UF/IFAS Extension super issues.
- Carry out the duties of my position.
- Establish working relationships with other Florida Cooperative Extension Service faculty.
- Follow established administrative procedures.
- Compile mandatory reports of Extension activities (e.g., Workload, ROA, or POW).
- Write accurate reports.
- Manage time effectively.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

- Analyze situations to identify the need for educational and information technology.
- Use email to provide information to clientele.
- Use a mobile phone to provide information to clientele.
- Use the Internet as a source of information when preparing training materials.
- Use online conferencing to communicate with Extension colleagues.
- Use online conferencing to communicate with clientele.
- Produce educational programs for TV.
- Produce educational videos for YouTube.
- Produce educational podcasts.
- Produce educational programs for radio.
- Deliver online programs.
- Use social media to promote UF/IFAS Extension.
- Use social media to promote local programs.
- Use Extension to provide information to clientele.

## EXTERNAL LINKAGES AND COLLABORATIONS

- Identify local government officials' names, districts, and party affiliations.
- Maintain regular communication through appropriate channels (e.g., CED or DED) with county commissioners.
- Ability to briefly articulate what UF/IFAS Extension is and who we serve.

- Ability to briefly articulate the key impacts of your Extension programs.
- Able to identify potential local partners, collaborators, and networks.
- Able to nurture successful partnerships, collaborations, and networks.
- Collaborate with a diverse range of organizations for program planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Maintain one or more active advisory councils for programming.
- Establish or maintain an advisory council for programming which represents the diversity of clientele.

## **INTERPERSONAL LEADERSHIP**

- Build positive relationships with many different individuals and groups.
- Apply cultural knowledge to address conflicts and negotiate common ground.
- React in a non-defensive manner.
- Open and continue dialogue in a non-threatening way.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the impact of words and actions.
- Provide feedback in order to check for mutual understanding.
- Use active listening strategies.
- Take others' perspectives into account.
- Demonstrate group facilitation skills.
- Demonstrate attributes of a positive role model.
- Manage conflict effectively.

## **VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT**

- Communicate available positions to community.
- Disseminate applications to potential volunteers.
- Conduct volunteer screening in accordance with UF/IFAS Extension policies.
- Match new volunteers with available roles with consideration of their skills and needs.
- Conduct initial orientation to the organization for new volunteers.
- Conduct ongoing educational opportunities for volunteers.
- Delegate appropriate responsibilities to volunteers.
- Address behaviors not consistent with acceptable standards.

- Provide regular performance feedback to volunteers.
- Implement recognition strategies for volunteers.
- Provide expanded leadership opportunities for volunteers.
- Train volunteers to accurately communicate to external audiences their role within UF/IFAS Extension system.

## **PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- Demonstrate attributes of a positive role model.
- Maintain high ethical standards.
- Accountable for my actions.
- Apply best practices to all aspects of work.
- Contribute to the knowledge base of UF/IFAS Extension.
- Provide research-based information to the public.
- Collaborate with other professionals.
- Seek professional affiliations that will enhance my knowledge base.
- Promote the profession to others.
- Serve as a catalyst for response to community needs.
- Promote UF/IFAS Extension to decision-makers.
- Identify opportunities for professional development.
- Attend relevant in-service trainings.
- Self-evaluate strengths and weaknesses as an Extension professional.
- Use professional, technical publications to keep current in my area of expertise.
- Share information with colleagues.
- Accept responsibility for all actions.

Table 1. Working Definitions for Priority Competency Areas

#	Area	Working Definition
1	Program Planning and Development	Strategies, methodologies, or tools used to develop an Extension program
2	Extension Teaching, Tools, and Methods	Means used to deliver educational content to clientele
3	Program Evaluation	Measures used to document outcomes and impacts as a means of accountability and program success
4	Subject Matter Expertise	Technical knowledge and skills possessed to perform tasks related to a specific field(s)
5	Extension Organization and Administration	Knowledge of the organization and overall management of the duties of the position
6	Professionalism and Professional Development	Maintaining a high code of excellence and ethics along with seeking opportunities to stay up-to-date in relevant fields
7	Information and Communication Technologies	Using current technologies to reach mass audiences and enhance programming
8	External Linkages	Collaborations with other governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and industry
9	Volunteer Development	Proactive use of the ISOTURE model to work with volunteers
10	Interpersonal Leadership	Process of creating change in others through positive relationship-oriented behaviors