



AREERA State Plans of Work

More on Planned Programs

There seems to be some confusion about how the 62 CSREES programs found on the CSREES website under the eleven National Emphasis Areas relate to the Knowledge Areas (KAs) (see first newsletter dated February 9, 2006). **The 62 CSREES programs and 11 National Emphasis Areas cited in the first newsletter merely illustrate examples of program titles.** You can attach KAs to any Planned Program title designated in your State’s Plan of Work or any other program or project report (i.e., CRIS). Each Planned Program can have multiple KAs and each KA can fit under multiple Planned Program. And that’s the point of classifying programs using KAs.

About Strategic Planning

The Plan of Work is a strategic plan for a given 5 year period. The purpose of a strategic plan is to improve an organization’s ability to engage in forward thinking and action in order to 1) use factors under its control to its greatest advantage, and 2) optimally adjust to the factors beyond its control. The use of the logic model structure in the Plan of Work facilitates this strategic planning process.

The great American philosopher, Yogi Berra, once said, “If you do not know where you are going, you are likely to end up somewhere else.”

Using the logic model, in Planned Programs strategic planning, presents a road map of where you are going.

Strategic Planning is a vital and dynamic exercise, which needs updates to remain relevant and useful. This is one of the reasons for an updated rolling 5-Year Plan of Work. Because resources are limited, we need to get the most benefit for our constituencies from the Federal formula dollars.

One of the best approaches to strategic planning for our situation is “Results-based accountability.” The Plan of Work fits this approach well. Results-based accountability is closely tied to a program evaluation. The focus is on generating positive outcomes for customers, clients, and polities. It relies on indicators and other means of proving the value of these outcomes.

CSREES will greatly benefit from your Plan of Work strategic plans and subsequent Annual Reports of Accomplishment. In the new NPL State Liaison structure of CSREES to begin this year, your NPL State Liaison will read and review your Plan of Work. The new logic model based structure of the Plan of Work planned programs section will help your NPL State Liaison understand your strategic thinking and action for each of the Planned Programs. We anticipate that this will improve our decision-making ability, enhance our organizational response, and promote superior CSREES-

University Partner relationships and development.

Our hope is that the resulting logic model structure of the Planned Programs section of the Plan of Work is useful to you in helping illustrate your planning and accountability process with your stakeholders and funding sources.

The CSREES Strategic Plan can be found at: www.csrees.usda.gov/about/strat_plan.html . Here you can see the relationship of the Knowledge Areas (formerly called Problem Areas) to the agency's Goals and Objectives. This too, like the Plan of Work, is a dynamic document which is updated periodically to keep pace with the Secretary of Agriculture's Goals and Objectives.

See Appendix A for a selected list of Strategic Planning Resources.

Logic Model Basics

About Assumptions

Assumptions are the beliefs we have about the program and the people involved and the way we think the program will work. This is the "theory" we are talking about: the underlying beliefs in how it will work. These are validated with research and experience. Assumptions underlie and influence the program decisions we make. Assumptions are principles, beliefs, ideas about:

- The problem or situation.
- The resources and staff.
- The way the program will operate.
- What the program expects to achieve.
- The knowledge base.
- The internal and external environment.
- The participants: how they learn, their behavior, motivations, etc.

For each Planned Program in the Plan of work, we want you discuss briefly the assumptions you are making for the planned activities you have selected.

Clarifying assumptions demands knowledge of the research or "best practice" in the substantive area, as well as "common sense."

Consider the following:

Why did you select the activities to solve problems, meet needs, and seize opportunities? Why do you believe that the program will work this way? Are your ideas and beliefs based on research, best practice, experience, local wisdom, intuition?

Is there evidence that supports the theory of action you've laid out? Review the following:

- Programming and change strategies that have proved effective in similar communities or situations
- Research literature
- Evaluation reports

Examples of assumptions:

- Communities can form coalitions to address these problems.
- Information on best practices shows that this approach works well for this target group.
- People will be motivated by these new materials to learn/change.
- Staff can be recruited and hired with necessary skills and abilities.

The focus of assumptions should also be science-based information on change in particular topics and activities: for example:

- Youth learn best in groups.
- Nutrition information leads to purchasing or preparation changes.

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