

Situational Analysis— Building Involvement and Ownership

A “situational analysis” done at the local or the statewide level should be carried out in a manner that builds a better understanding of the context or situation for all stakeholders in a community. The community may be a county geographic unit or it may be a statewide community of interest, such as, the dairy industry.

The objective is to build a foundation for good decision making on program priorities and the use of limited resources on a local or statewide basis.

Our programmatic needs are better served if the community we serve feels that they have been meaningfully involved in:

- Gathering the data
- Analyzing and interpreting the data
- Identifying community needs and assets
- Selecting critical community needs and concerns
- Communicating the results

Greater involvement leads to a greater sense of ownership of the process. Greater ownership leads to a stronger commitment to the priorities that are identified in the priority setting process.

Establishing the Process of Situational Analysis:

- What is the purpose of situational analysis and who will use the results?
- Who is involved and what process do we use?
- What data exists?
- What data is needed?
- What resources are needed?
- Who is involved in the analysis and interpretation of the data?
- How will our analysis be communicated?

Questions for Situational Analysis:

- What are the major issues and concerns facing people in the county?
- What are the major challenges facing youth, families, business, industry, environment, agriculture, government, schools, etc. in the next year, next five years, next 10 years?

- What major strengths/capabilities/assets exist to improve the quality of life and work in the county?
- What are the positive things about the quality of life and work that we want to preserve?
- What are the negative things about the quality of life and work that we want to change?
- What major statewide and national trends will impact the economy and the quality of life within the county?
- Under ideal circumstances, what do you want our community/county to look like within the next five years?

Communicating about Situational Analysis

Communicating broadly helps to build involvement and ownership. While we often think about communicating **after** an event to broadcast the results, it is also advantageous to communicate early in order to explain and build commitment to the process.

Consider various ways you might communicate with key stakeholders and the county population to encourage participation in the situational analysis and to gain visibility for the Extension effort.

News releases have multiple benefits. They:

- Create awareness that Extension undertakes a comprehensive planning effort every four years
- Show that Extension is interested in local issues and concerns
- Enhance Extension's visibility
- Motivate people to participate (If you are undertaking a countywide survey, this may be particularly important.)

When writing a news release, say *who, what, where, when, why* and *how* in the first paragraph, if you can. Study your newspaper and notice how deftly most writers work that type of information into the first paragraph of each article. In addition, it is helpful if you remember the following:

- Know your contact's name, title, telephone, fax and department.
- Mail or fax your release 10 days in advance of the release date.

Don't limit your news releases to just the traditional media—newspapers, radio and television. Consider other venues that will get your information to your targeted audience. These might include organizational newsletters, trade publications, etc.