

Community Development, Economic Development, or Community Economic Development?

Concepts, Tools and Practices

Community Organizing and Development: Roles for Practitioners and Educators

Roles for Practitioners and Educators

Three roles for practitioners:

- Self-help
- Technical assistance
- Conflict

Four models of technical assistance:

- Continuous local assistance model
- Regional resource model
- Parachute model
- Leadership training model

Roles for Practitioners and Educators

***Self-Help* is based on the premise that the people of the community can, should and will solve their own problems.**

- The practitioner is a facilitator of the process. The self-help approach requires the practitioner to act differently depending on whether or not the community is well defined.
- If the community is not well defined, or lacks organization, the practitioner serves as a facilitator or organizer, and as a proxy leader.
- On the other hand, the practitioner injects the right kind of information to key participants if the community is well defined or organized, but may not be forward thinking.

Roles for Practitioners and Educators

Advantages of the self-help approach:

- it often builds a stronger sense of community;
- it often evolves into a holistic approach;
- it builds a self-sustaining ability to deal with new problems; and
- it allows for community specific solutions.

Disadvantages of the self-help approach:

- it works best in smaller communities or neighborhoods but change is often slow;
- special interests may cloud issues and cause the true community to take a longer time to appear;
- since the practitioner is concerned about the community learning to do-it-itself, accomplishing specific tasks may be secondary;
- decisions may be based on impression rather than fact;
- process can be more important than outcomes.

Roles for Practitioners and Educators

The ***Technical Assistance approach*** is based on the premise that the community is well defined, the community has identified a problem or goal, and is moving toward a plan of action.

- ❑ The practitioner supports task-oriented actions.
- ❑ For the practitioner, approaches to technical assistance vary with whether one is doing policy development or implementation.

In policy development, the practitioner uses the *scientific method* to identify strengths and weaknesses of the community. These analyses are then used to help formulate policy.

In policy implementation the approach is based on the premise that the community has identified policies to achieve defined goals or objectives. The practitioner helps in the technical implementation of the policy.

Roles for Practitioners and Educators

Advantages of the technical assistance approach

- change can be rapid;
- it works in any size community;
- it is task driven (easier to "sink your teeth" into it); and
- that decisions are based on fact.

Disadvantages of the technical assistance approach

- it can give the illusion of finality of the process;
- that the process may be lost to task accomplishment;
- that it often loses the *holistic* view; and
- that it presumes the practitioner has, or can obtain, the necessary technical skills.

Roles for Practitioners and Educators

Technical assistance models

Continuous local assistance model

Here a local development organization or local government has a professional staff. The county Cooperative Extension office complements this model.

Regional resource model

In Wisconsin these take the form of regional planning commissions and more recently regional economic development organizations such as the New North, Thrive, and Milwaukee Seven.

Parachute model

Here a hired consultant is brought in to perform work on specific projects.

Leadership training model

This approach invests in local human capital so the necessary skills are embedded in the community.



Roles for Practitioners and Educators

Conflict is based on the premise that the community is fragmented and grid-locked. The practitioner works to break the gridlock.

- Here the practitioner works either as an advocate or mediator.
- As an advocate, the practitioner works with a segment (perhaps the silent majority) of the community assumed to be suppressed by the leadership of the community or other more vocal groups.
- The role of the practitioner is to act as an advocate for the oppressed group.
- As a mediator, the practitioner acts as a facilitator to open lines of communication between and within sub-groups then works toward compromise to effect change.

Roles for Practitioners and Educators

Saul Alinsky → Conflict Approach

1. Analyze power structure
2. Define problem
3. Organize
4. Demonstrate value of power
5. Never confront power structure directly
6. Be realistic--compromise
7. Develop permanent organization
8. Begin again



Roles for Practitioners and Educators

Advantages of the conflict approach

- rapid change;
- communication within the community is opened (silent majority); and
- future alliances forged.

Disadvantages of the conflict approach

- the possibility that the practitioner may be viewed as biased;
- that opponents may become enemies;
- that change is often not sustainable; and
- don't plan on living in that community very long.....

Roles for Practitioners and Educators

Roles for Cooperative Extension Educators

When thinking about the potential roles for CNRED Educators in community economic development it is useful to revisit the Vision Statement for CNRED:

- *To be the premier source of research and education that benefits the lives of individuals, families, businesses, organizations and communities.*
- *Wisconsin's educational network for engaging people and their communities in positive change.*

This implies that a blending of the self-help and technical assistance approaches is most appropriate for CNRED Educators.

“...premier source of research...” → technical assistance through research
“...network for engaging...” → self help through organizational development or in the terms of the Shaffer Star development of local institutions



Roles for Practitioners and Educators

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CNRED Vision, Mission, Values, and Beliefs

(Portions are based on "Strengthening Communities: Strategic Directions for Community Resources and Economic Development Programs," USDA CSREES CRED Base Program Team, Sept. 2001.)

Vision

- *To be the premier source of research and education that benefits the lives of individuals, families, businesses, organizations and communities.*
- *Wisconsin's educational network for engaging people and their communities in positive change.*

Mission

To improve the long-term well-being of individuals, families, businesses, organizations and communities through research and experience-based education.

UW-Extension extends the knowledge and resources of the University of Wisconsin to people where they live and work.

University of Wisconsin-Extension programs in Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development help Wisconsin communities deal with their own unique challenges.

To realize our vision, the CNRED Program will:

- Provide communities with equal access to quality programmatic support for community resources and economic development.
- Help communities prepare to assume increased responsibility for determining their own futures.
- Enhance the capacity of residents and communities to understand and be engaged in the decisions that affect their lives.
- Develop appropriate constituency groups to design, obtain, and maintain necessary resources to sustain effective programs.
- Utilize a network of county-based and campus-based faculty and staff in designing, developing, and delivering programs.
- Build new and strengthen existing working relationships with public and private agencies, organizations, and other groups.
- Coordinate with other Extension Program Areas and units to identify and respond to issues critical for the long-term well-being of our society.

Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development educators and programs strengthen communities in a variety of ways. They:

- Provide access to knowledge, organizing skills, linkage to information and resource networks that address locally-important issues.
- Enhance processes for strategic thinking to support local decision making.
- Enhance knowledge of options for development and regulations affecting situations.
- Provide resource-based information that can come from interdisciplinary analysis.
- Introduction best management practice adoption
- Offer educative support to organizations and government that promotes efficiency and effectiveness.

Values and Beliefs

The values and beliefs upon which programs such as CNRED are distinguish the Cooperative Extension System as a leader in research-based education. These values and beliefs provide the foundation upon which effective programs to address CNRED strategic goals and actions are implemented.

Extension professionals in CNRED value:

- Long-term resource commitment
- Unbiased, objective, research-based education
- Educational partnerships and networks that promote program flexibility, diversity, and accountability
- Leadership by merit
- Honesty and professionalism
- Risk taking
- Self-determination
- Informed decision making

CNRED educators believe:

- Education can empower people and communities to respond to new opportunities.
- Extension cannot do it all, nor can Extension do it alone.
- Not all strategies or programs will work in all areas; local and regional differences exist and must be recognized.
- Stressed communities and limited-resource constituents deserve special attention.
- CES provides an interdisciplinary approach to community development.
- Universities must look beyond their traditional programs, partners, and audiences.
- CNRED programs must be sustained in the community to support community leadership.
- All Extension programs will benefit from building a strong relationship with local communities.
- Extension professionals best serve their customers by participating as partners to bring about human capacity building and economic development and are, therefore, engaged as co-learners.
- Extension professionals are change agents and function successfully in diverse situations.
- All research and education that is provided should present objective alternatives and consequences.



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When one place the philosophies behind the **self-help** and **technical assistance** approaches next to the CNRED Vision, Missions, Values and Beliefs statement the level of overlap is significant.

If we can compress the CNRED statement to a simple phrase:

Helping people and communities make more informed decisions.

We can see both self-help through the processes of community engagement and decision-making as well as technical assistance through the creation and dissemination of new knowledge.

Making decisions → self-help with a focus on process

More informed → technical assistance with a focus on research



Roles for Practitioners and Educators

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Key to the “success” and long-term sustainability of CNRED programming is that a **positive** approach is taken over **normative** approaches.

The decisions to be made are those of the individual and community and must reflect the values and understanding of the issues at hand independent of the values of the practitioner/educator.

The community economic development educational programs must be unbiased, objective and independent of the practitioner/educators’ personal values.

Roles for Practitioners and Educators

Roles for Cooperative Extension Educators

The strive to be objective within any Extension educational program, however, can be difficult.

When working with a community the practitioner/educator must make several key decisions, all of which are influenced by the values of the practitioner/educator:

- How to approach the community?
- Who is involved in the process?
- What is the structure of the educational program?
- What research is to be conducted?
- What information from that research is to be shared and in what format?

Roles for Practitioners and Educators

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Some have argued that community economic development is as much **art** as it is **science**. Just as no two economists or sociologists approach a research problem exactly the same way, no two practitioners/educators approach community economic development is the exact same way.

- The **science** is based on theory and the results of applied research.
- The **art** is based on experience.

In the process of deciding how to approach the community, which process to adapt, which research based information to share and how to share that information is part of the art of community economic development. **Here the values of the practitioner/educator directly influence how the educational program is structured and moves forward.**



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Roles for Cooperative Extension Educators

One of the longest debates within community economic development and CNRED is the **balance between process and content**.

Self help → emphasizes process over content

Technical Assistance → emphasizes content over process

Notions of community development tends to be biased toward process.
Notions of economic development tends to be biased toward content.

The challenge (art?) is finding the right balance which will be different across communities and issues being addressed.

Recommended Readings



Robinson, J.W. and G.P. Green (2011) Introduction to Community Development Theory, Practice, and Service-Learning. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, California.

Christenson, J.A. and Jerry W. Robinson. (1989) Community Development in Perspective. Iowa State University Press: Ames, IA.

Shaffer, R., S.C. Deller and D.W. Marcouiller. (2004). Community Economics: Linking Theory and Practice. Blackwell: Oxford England.

Green, G.P. and A. Haines. 2011. Asset Building and Community Development. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, California. (Revised and expanded 3rd edition).



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