

2007 University of Arkansas Combined Research and Extension Plan of Work

Families, Youth, & Communities

V(B). Program Knowledge Area(s)

1. Program Knowledge Areas and Percentage

- 602 7% Business Management, Finance, and Taxation
- 608 10% Community Resource Planning and Development
- 610 8% Domestic Policy Analysis
- 801 5% Individual and Family Resource Management
- 802 5% Human Development and Family Well-Being
- 803 5% Sociological and Technological Change Affecting Individuals, Families and Communities
- 804 5% Human Environmental Issues Concerning Apparel, Textiles, and Residential and Commercial Structures
- 805 5% Community Institutions, Health, and Social Services
- 806 50% Youth Development

V(C). Planned Program (Situation and Scope)

1. Situation and priorities

Arkansas remains one of the most rural states in the Union, but is undergoing rapid demographic, political and economic change. Many of the state's most rural communities, especially those most dependent upon natural resource economies, such as forest-dependent communities, struggle to gain some control over decisions that may affect their community as more responsibilities are forced upon them without new resources. Other communities find their quality of life threatened by rapid and uncontrolled growth. More than a decade of various kinds of local needs assessments have made it clear that rural communities require help in dealing with local economic development and quality of life issues. These include concerns about job development, education, youth, and crime; local infrastructure, paralyzing conflict in their communities, leadership and local decision-making. Special concern exists for the Mississippi River Delta region, where out-migration, economic decline, and conflict have become endemic in many communities. The number of jobs declined in all but one rural Delta county between 2000 and 2003. Seventeen Arkansas counties had median household incomes of less than \$26,000 in 1999; all of these are rural counties.

There are 680,369 youth under age 18 living in 371,331 households. Over 20 percent of Arkansas' young people are living in poverty. Currently, 167,902 children live in a single-parent family and 62,167 children live in a household with other relatives. There are 273,182 children with both parents in the workforce, 150,000 children with one parent in the workforce and 20,075 children with neither parent in the household. Many children have very little nurturing or mentoring from committed adults. The societal challenges combine with limited parenting and relationship skills and poorer social support networks overwhelm many Arkansans. Arkansas is also experiencing a significant increase in the Hispanic youth population, now totaling 32,016 children under age 18. Ethnic diversity is an increasing important factor in programming decisions. With new and growing challenges, effective youth development is more important than ever.

Divorce costs the United States an estimated \$33.3 billion annually; or \$312 per household. Twenty-eight percent of Arkansas families are headed by a single parent; 65 % of mothers with children under the age of five are in the workforce; 72 % of children under the age of 6 live in families with both parents working; over 70 % of children 3-6 years of age spend substantial amounts of time in non-parental care; 52 % of children under three are in non-parental care. In 2005, 553 of Arkansas' 2,851 licensed child care facilities have achieved quality approval status. Training available at times, locations and formats convenient to child care providers is essential to improving the quality of Arkansas child care.

V(D). Planned Program (Assumptions and Goals)

1. Assumptions made for the Program

Programs addressing quality of life and community development issues focus on addressing specific needs of communities and families in close collaboration with state and federal agencies and policymakers. Close coordination is required between the experiment station and cooperative extension to ensure that research studies are conducted that meet specific needs of importance and that needed information is utilized in a public outreach program or to provide needed information for policymakers. A survey research center has been developed to facilitate research in the social sciences and to serve as a resource to policymakers, state agencies and communities.

The Arkansas 4-H Program focuses its work on teaching youth and adults the life skills necessary to become capable, competent and caring citizens. The theory of Positive Youth Development guides program development for the Arkansas 4-H Program. The research based Targeting Life Skills Model is the foundation for measuring life skill development. Eight life skills have been selected to measure on a statewide basis.

The life skills are:

- « Decision Making
- « Wise Use of Resources
- « Communication

- « Accepting Differences
- « Leadership
- « Useful/Marketable Skills
- « Healthy Lifestyle Choices
- « Self-Responsibility

Child care training will continue to be a need because of state mandated licensing requirements. Funding will remain stable or increase during the next seven years. Knowledge can lead to attitude and behavior change. Child care providers will be motivated to learn and adopt recommended practices. Targeted audiences are willing and able to participate in child care training programs.

Improving the economic well-being and quality of life for Arkansans and Arkansas communities is increasingly challenging in today's world. Issues such as globalization, changes in information technologies, government regulatory and fiscal policy, demographic shifts, threats of terrorism, and social needs all impact our society. Education programs are needed to help citizens, businesses, and communities deal with these issues and take advantage of opportunities that accompany these changes.

The needs are numerous. Counseling, education, and technical assistance for home-based and other small businesses are needed for rural economic development. Business owners and professionals need continuing education regarding changes in regulatory and tax policy. Youth and adults need leadership, government, citizenship, and issue-driven knowledge and skills so that they can act strategically to position their communities for continued economic viability and success.

2. Ultimate goal(s) of this Program

- « To enhance the economic opportunity and quality of life for all Arkansas citizens with a particular emphasis on rural communities and under-served populations
- « To strengthen and increase the quality of marriage and couple relationships
- « Quality parenting that leads to socially competent children
- « Individuals (teens and adults) achieve personal well-being through skill development, attitude change, and the adoption of effective practices
- « The mission of 4-H is to provide opportunities for youth to acquire knowledge, develop life skills, form attitudes, and practice behavior that will enable them to become self directing, productive, and contributing members of society
- « To improve the quality of care for the children in Arkansas
- « Launch a strategic approach to leadership and community development including an asset-based mindset, a culture of collaboration and entrepreneurial development to support development of economic and community sustainability and growth

V(F). Planned Program (Activity)

1. Activity for the Program

Division of Agriculture research programs addressing quality of life and community development issues focus on addressing specific needs of communities and families in close collaboration with state and federal agencies and policy makers.

Parenting and Family Relationships, and Individual Development: Develop, evaluate, and disseminate education programs and curricula, incorporating new Division of Agriculture research.

Couple and Marriage Relationships:

- « Design and develop the Marriage Journey curriculum to promote strong marriages.
- « Provide more information and resources for strengthening marriage on the www.arfamilies.org website.
- « Train county FCS agents how to facilitate marriage education workshops.
- « Provide the best marriage education resources (e.g., books, videos, curriculum, etc.) to county FCS agents.

The 4-H Program in Arkansas is delivered through the 75 counties using research based, jury reviewed curriculum. State Faculty provides program leadership and direction. Site based experiential learning programs are delivered at the Arkansas 4-H Center and the Lonoke Farm. Specific 4-H Program deliver modes include:

- « Organized 4-H Clubs
- « School enrichment programs
- « After School clubs/programs
- « Special Interests groups
- « Camping

Three Child Care provider training programs supporting this plan of work:

- « The Best Care
- « Best Care Connected
- « Guiding Children Successfully