

THE MICHIGAN STUDY-DISCUSSION PROGRAM, "DEVELOPING HUMAN RESOURCES IN MICHIGAN"

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I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

This effort has been officially entitled, The Michigan Cooperative Extension Service Study-Discussion Program, "Developing Human Resources in Michigan." Quite naturally it is commonly known as the "Human Resource Development Program."

Throughout the state this study-discussion program will receive major extension emphasis during the years of 1964 and 1965. The objectives of the program have been agreed upon as follows:

1. To help the citizens of Michigan to become alerted to the major occupation shifts that are likely to occur in the next five years.
2. To help the citizens of Michigan to better understand the educational and training needs which are necessary for Michigan people to adapt to the changes.
3. To provide an opportunity for Michigan leaders to discuss these problems and to further study and consider action programs to solve them.

The basic pattern of operations was developed by a Guidance Committee and tested in six pilot counties throughout the state from January to June of 1964 as follows:

1. The six discussion leaflets on "Developing Human Resources for Economic Growth"² are the basic materials. In addition, supplementary material on Michigan human resources, discussion guides and agent guidebooks, and support materials have also been prepared.

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²The six leaflets prepared under the joint sponsorship of the Farm Foundation, the Federal Extension Service, the National Committee on Agricultural Policy, the Agricultural Policy Institute at North Carolina State, and the Center for Agricultural and Economic Development at Iowa State University, discuss: (1) people, jobs, and economic growth, (2) our manpower-employment situation, (3) American workers on the move, (4) when people move, (5) education and training, and (6) policy alternatives for increasing employment opportunities.

2. All agents in each county will be specifically trained in the use of the materials mentioned above and in training local leaders for organizing and conducting discussion groups. (Five one-day district training meetings will be held from September 21 to 30, at which a team of six Guidance Committee members will present the entire program and work with county staffs in initial planning of their efforts.)
3. "Citizen leaders" concerned with "Human Resource Development" are to be recruited (the goal is 50-75 in each county.) Each county is urged to establish a guidance committee. (October 1964)
4. Using the ideas developed above, the citizen leaders in each county will be trained by the county staff in three successive discussion meetings. (November and December 1964)
5. Each citizen leader is to be encouraged to organize and conduct a group of neighbors and friends through three similar "self-administered" discussion meetings. (January and February 1965)
6. It is hoped that many citizen action programs will result in the improvement of opportunities for "Developing Human Resources in Michigan."

II. THE PILOT COUNTY PROGRAM

The Guidance Committee for this program initiated a pilot county program for each of the six extension districts to test methods and observe public acceptance.

First, a two-day training program was held on the campus for all county personnel plus two lay leaders from each of the six counties—one of which was to represent education. Since some of the county extension people were in various degrees hostile to this type of program and area of work for extension, the inclusion of lay people may have been the salvation of the pilot efforts. Their enthusiasm made it difficult, if not impossible, for extension to remain passive.

This training session and indeed the entire pilot effort served as a positive guide for the future and also demonstrated what not to do. Too much time was spent presenting subject matter which was available in the leaflets and supplementary reading material. Not enough time was given to how to organize a leaders' meeting and discussion groups and how to implement the program in the county.

Out of the pilot experience developed an effective one-day training session and the effective county organization and implementation

program outlined above. Because of cost and other difficulties involved, lay leaders will not be included in district conferences. Their role in stimulating county personnel into action is less necessary at this point. The program is no longer considered "prospective" or "voluntary." Furthermore, this can now be done by a county worker from a pilot program who will be assigned this role at the district training session.

Initial Results—Spring of 1964

Since we did not want to lose a year in a pilot test this became a "crash" program, not well planned, and too late in the spring of 1964. If any pilot counties actually got a self-administered discussion program under way, it has not been reported. In some counties, after three meetings with a small group of leaders the main result was that the group felt the program was so important that they should expand the leadership group and start from scratch this fall. A member of our Guidance Committee made an effort to attend the training sessions in the counties.

Here are excerpts from a report by Art Mauch to the Guidance Committee following observation of all three sessions in one county.

DISCUSSION No. 1. Although called for by the program, introductions were overlooked. Since the audience included people that were strange to each other, this was unfortunate.

It would have been helpful to have handed out the program and discussed the agenda along with the purpose of the meeting so that those participating would know what to expect.

The minister's presentation of leaflet No. 1 was "homey" and straight from the heart—got them off to a good "informal" start.

The farmer chairman did a professional job of conducting the meeting. But the performance by the professionals was dull and unprofessional.

The discussion response was excellent. The county staff had prepared some really good questions for discussion. The short reports by group recorders were well presented, and realistic as well as imaginative.

About 40 attended (in addition to the staff and observers).

An interesting sidelight involved a young man who after the meeting said he was there by mistake. He thought it was an FTA meeting. When asked why he had not left, he replied, "I got interested, curious, and so involved that I wanted to stay. Furthermore, I'll be

back next week." And he was. In fact, the county agent said he had been "talking it up" all week over the county. He was a salesman, father of two. At each session he was selected to make the report for his group.

DISCUSSION No. 2. This time introductions were made. The program was mimeographed, distributed, and discussed. The introductions were illuminating. The sheet passed around and signed showed these classifications: 6 farmers (1 retired), 1 conservation officer, 1 Michigan Milk Producers' Association member, 2 farmer-insurance group members, 1 PCA member, 1 4-H member, 1 home economics council member, 4 homemakers, 5 high school teachers (2 vo-ag), 1 high school principal, 1 parent-teachers member, 1 literary club member, 2 Bureau of Social Aid members (both young men), 1 juvenile agent, 1 dentist, 1 salesman, and 1 preacher.

The presentations lacked "life," some of the charts were misinterpreted, but again there was enthusiastic and intelligent open discussion and group discussion, and excellent ideas were reported. The discussion questions again were very good. Lack of flexibility was exhibited when, in spite of a drop in attendance, the staff stuck to six discussion groups with only 4 or 5 in each group.

In the first two meetings too much time was spent on presentation of subject matter and too little on group discussion of local problems and plans for further study of local conditions. Hence, it was suggested that at least half of meeting number 3 be reserved for that purpose.

DISCUSSION No. 3. About one hour was used to discuss leaflets No. 3, 4, and 6. Some of the key slides in No. 2 and 5 were reviewed.

The idea of dividing the time roughly in half between presentation and group discussion (with coffee break while moving) is excellent.

The presentations by the county staff showed some improvement.

The group discussions were very good and the reports were fairly complete, well organized, and presented with enthusiasm (by such people as vo-ag teachers, a high school guidance counselor, and a young farmer).

The real high light came after 11:00 p.m. Adjournment was held up by several persistent pleas for a *continuing* organization. (The opinionnaires also indicated a desire for further study and action.)

The group finally elected as permanent chairman the farmer who had acted as chairman and designated the original advisory group to continue as a sort of executive committee. The group suggested that this smaller group work with extension to call additional meetings after it had time to carry the discussion material to other groups.

Some committed themselves to be discussion leaders—but not many took a supply of leaflets with them.

They were asked to report to the county extension director any discussion meetings, numbers attending, and any action or reactions.

The participants were high in their praise—and felt that this definitely was a good activity for extension.

OTHER COUNTIES. In another county, instead of three meetings with a cross-section of leaders, two meetings each were held with Farm Bureau leaders, home economics leaders, and business and service club leaders.

The district director attended a meeting of home economics leaders. Here are a few of his comments to our Guidance Committee: “They were very complimentary on the content of the lesson materials and indicated that they had to go over and over them many times to get the real significance. The women were most appreciative of this kind of information and the major discussion centered in the area of school dropouts and training the high school graduates for their place in careers and society. I am sure that this group alone will not let this information die out, but certainly will influence their local school boards and parents on many of the apparent reasons for our school problems.”

In another county only one meeting was held. It will start over this fall. But the interest at the one meeting triggered the printing of a very complete report of county data that up to then had received very little public attention.

Conclusion

Since we were “plowing new ground,” we are convinced that the pilot program was necessary and worth while. It would have been sad indeed to have made all of these mistakes in 83 counties.

We decided to substitute a “quickie” true-false quiz for an eye-opener in place of a rather formidable opinionnaire. We reduced the time for training extension personnel to one big day with less emphasis on subject matter and more on how to get the job done. We spent many hours and days this summer in planning the state-wide program, sharpening the visual aids, and preparing supplementary material.

Special emphasis was placed on preparing material that spelled out the details of organization in the county and the implementation of the leaders’ training and the self-administered discussion program and follow-up.

We will probably learn that we still have left some gaps in the instructions.

Perhaps the greatest lesson learned from the pilot program can be summed up most succinctly as follows: *Never try to carry out a vast program without vast preparation!*

Special materials prepared for the program included:

1. *The six leaflets, "Developing Human Resources for Economic Growth."* Forty thousand sets were printed in Michigan on paper that would distinguish them from the original and also reduce cost of printing.
2. *Slide Sets.* Forty-three colored slides based on the information in the leaflets and on pertinent Michigan data were prepared. One hundred sets were duplicated for use by agents throughout the state. A script for narrating the slides was also prepared.
3. *True-False Quiz.* Twenty-five thousand copies of an eye-opener of 20 true-false questions were prepared to arouse interest at the original training meetings.
4. *Promotional Folder, "The Human Factor in Michigan's Future."* The Guidance Committee for this special program prepared a very precise publication summarizing the entire content and procedure for the program and had 25,000 copies printed for use throughout Michigan.
5. *County Extension Agent's Guidebook.* Step by step suggested procedures for extension sponsorship of the program were developed. Emphasis was placed on suggested approaches for assembling local data to support national and state data included in the above materials.
6. *Mass Media Materials:* (a) a 10-minute colored documentary film on "Developing Human Resources in Michigan" will be completed in October; (b) a 29-minute "TV-tape documentary" for use throughout the state has been completed; (c) a "press and radio-TV kit" containing suggested news articles, fillers, and radio and TV programs is available for use by agents.
7. *"How to Make Group Discussions Click."* This single printed sheet is to be made available to all participants and leaders summarizing key points for leading small (8-12 member) discussion groups. It also contains suggestions for members which will help them to make their meetings more effective.
8. *"Manpower in Michigan: A Reappraisal of the 1960's."* Pre-

pared and published by the Michigan Employment Security Commission, this September 1964 report contains 28 pages of tables, charts, and text describing population and employment trends, educational data, economic and industrial outlook, etc. All county offices and discussion leaders will have a copy.

9. *Pamphlets, Bulletins, Magazine and Newspaper Clippings.* Additional information which members of the guidance committee have come upon from time to time are to be made available on a one per county basis for background information and intensive analysis of the problem.

III. COOPERATIVE VENTURE IN PROGRAMMING

From the first it was recognized that, to help assure success, the Human Resource Development Program in Michigan must not be viewed as an activity of only one segment of the Cooperative Extension Service. The topic obviously touches everyone's program area in some way, regardless of the audience to whom the program is ordinarily directed.

To make sure of complete support at the state level and help assure its reflection at the county level, the Director named, more than a year ago, a "Guidance Committee" to plan the strategy and implement the program. The Chairman is William Kimball, who has had extensive experience in organizing and executing citizens programs in county development. Art Mauch, chairman of the national task force which developed the basic leaflet materials, was another obvious choice for the committee. Rounding out the group is representation from Home Economics and Family Life, 4-H, Office of Information Services, the District Directors administrative staff, and programming interests in Community Resource Development and Public Affairs. This committee has worked well together in frequent and lengthy sessions.

Specialist Art Mauch laid the initial groundwork for this program. His alternative proposals to the extension administration about a year ago included: (1) the modest notion that we simply make copies of the leaflets available to county offices and announce widely their availability, (2) simply announcing that a "packaged program" was available for counties wishing to take advantage of it, or (3) the "intensive use" alternative, finally determined upon, to make the leaflets the core of a high priority extension program in every county over the entire state.

A representative of the district directors' team contributed many ideas to our strategy of implementation and provided liaison between

our committee and his fellow district directors. Thus informed, they could conveniently apprise us if our approach and timing needed modification to fit into over-all programs in the counties.

If neighborhood group discussions based upon the human resource development leaflets are to succeed, they must be led by able persons. Here the role of the county staffs is critical, for we are forced to depend on them to train the leaders. We believe, on the basis of our pilot efforts, that we can provide county staffs with the skill to do the job. Here again, our guidance committee has worked as a team to train pilot county staffs and will travel from district to district as a team to do the training for the state-wide program. The county staffs, in turn, will *work as a team* to train discussion group leaders.

The final group in this program are the lay leaders—key citizens, community minded persons who not only recognize problems but are willing to do something about them. We know that the county staffs have the capability to pull together 50 to 75 outstanding and interested citizens for a series of meetings on “People, Jobs, and Growth.” We know many of these citizens will want to take the responsibility of holding neighborhood meetings to consider the issues of employment needs and opportunities; of education and training. County extension staffs will encourage these activities and service the groups once they get set up but will *not* be expected to *run* them. Even those key leaders who do not form neighborhood discussion groups will profit from the exchange with other leaders on this important topic and will be that much more interested in, and intelligent about people, jobs, and growth.

In order to make this cooperative venture a success, it has been necessary to redirect some of our energies and to run a little faster to do this *on top of* our regular work. Enthusiasm is so high on this program that our district director member of the Guidance Committee worked not only on Labor Day but last Saturday as well in order to put final touches on implementation plans.

We think we have put together a winning combination, from the team at the state university to the teams in county offices.