A New Model for Sustaining and Expanding Extension Programs

SUMMARY: OSU Extension’s ability to adapt to a wide variety of financial opportunities and relationships and its willingness to do business in new ways will largely determine our success as an organization in the future. Funding through an OSU Innovative Grant will support the development, implementation and evaluation of a new funding structure model for 4-H Wildlife Stewards that can be replicated with other Extension Programs. A Program Business Plan which incorporates a $500,000 annual operating budget funded through grants, sponsorships, contracts, fees for service and product sales will serve as the template for this new model.

PROJECT TEAM

Maureen Hosty (PI) is a 4-H Extension faculty and an associate professor in the College of Education. She has been an Extension faculty member for 3 years in Arlington, VA and the last 15 years in Oregon. She provides leadership to the 4-H Wildlife Stewards statewide project currently funded by the National Science Foundation. The Project has won 17 state, regional and national awards.

Collaborators:

- Robin Galloway  4-H Extension Faculty/Linn County  State Design Team
- Maggie Livesay  4-H Extension Faculty  State Design Team
- Susan Wieske  4-H Program Assistant  Product Sales/Web Site
- Sally Yackley  4-H Project Assistant  Sponsorship Events Coord.
- Beth Emhoff  Portland Metro Liaison  Advisor and Consultant
- TBA  OSU Business Intern  Market analysis and Bus. Plan
- Kelly Wildman  Wild River Networks  Web Designer
- Carrie Tasman  Tasman Studios  Graphic Artist

TARGET AUDIENCE:

- Community partners, natural resources government agencies, school districts, state Extension partners (outside of Oregon), and businesses will be recruited as funding partners.
- As this project is developed and evaluated Extension faculty and staff will benefit as well. The program will serve as a model and learning tool for other staff to replicate.

JUSTIFICATION: Today more than ever it is critical that Extension programs employ diverse funding strategies for greater growth and impact. Extension can no longer rely on public funding to keep up with the increased demand for services. It is recognized that Extension must be proactive and identify a wider variety of funding sources and begin to think creatively about program sustainability (OSU Extension: Sustaining and Expanding Extension Programs, 2004).

Program sustainability is and continues to be a challenge for many Extension faculty and staff. While many Extension staff have successfully secured external funding through grants, contracts and fees, it is still always shadowed by knowledge that grants, awards, and contracts are finite. The time funded for action and impact is limited. When projects begin, staff move quickly to locate and secure space, hire and orient staff, recruit clients, and begin service delivery. They contract with evaluators and assure the project’s intended outcomes are clear. They acquire clearances for research, set up accounting systems, and calendar reporting dates. And all the time, in spite of all the activity, the grayness lurks.

How can Extension faculty and staff remain responsive to public needs and issues by introducing new programs such as 4-H Wildlife Stewards that can in time become institutionalized as public interest and demand grows? What are best practices that build a new but sustainable funding model? Can staff take a program with a good idea and seed money for piloting innovative ideas and turn that program into a program spreads and grows through multiple communities and funded through multiple funding sources? This proposal will explore and document whether this in fact is attainable.

In 1996 the 4-H Wildlife Stewards program began with a $10,000 OSU Innovative Grant to develop a new delivery model for 4-H. In the first year 17 volunteers were trained to work with 1400 students and 32 teachers in six schools. As the program built success additional resources and funding followed. In 10 years the program has been awarded 16 grants totaling $965, 181. Today the 4-H Wildlife Stewards supports 190 active volunteers, 432 teachers and 13,441 students in 60 schools across Oregon. Extension faculty across the country have requested information about this program and the program has been adopted in Alabama. Each month 1200-1500 visitors visit the 4-H Wildlife Stewards website. The program has a wide variety of curriculum, resources and products including a volunteer handbook, a soon to be published trainer’s guide, training videos, t-shirts, certificates, student journals, an on-line web...
course and much more. The 4-H Wildlife Stewards Program is ready to move to the next level of instituting this program statewide and expanding nationally. In order to sustain and institutionalize this program as well as expand it beyond Oregon, the program will require a minimum of 5 program staff, support staff, a web designer, and travel and supply dollars – a total of approximately $500,000 a year.

A comprehensive Program Business plan will be developed. This plan will not rely on one or two funding sources but instead incorporate a full portfolio of funding from public dollars, grants, contracts, sponsorships, product sales and fees for service. The plan will then be implemented and tested as a model for ensuring greater sustainability. Funding through the Extension Innovative Grant will support the development, implementation and evaluation of this Program Business plan.

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
- To develop a new and innovative funding structure for Extension programs that includes a full portfolio of public dollars, grants, contracts, fees for service, product sales and sponsorships
- To document and assess the skills, knowledge, resources, and time needed for Extension faculty to do business differently and secure funding from alternative sources.
- To evaluate and document the keys to success as well as the barriers for developing and implementing a program business plan.
- To establish, test, and document the support structures needed to secure other funding such as accounting systems, university clearances, reporting, etc.

ANTICIPATED PROJECT OUTCOMES
- A program business plan for the 4-H Wildlife Stewards Program will be written and pilot tested
- $300,000 will be secured through sponsorships, grants, fees for service and product sales to sustain and expand the 4-H Wildlife Stewards program.
- A documented report of what works, what did not work and how it worked or didn’t work will be developed and shared with extension staff who are exploring alternative funding options.
- Increased visibility of OSU and Extension 4-H in the Portland Metro area

PROPOSED PROJECT ACTIVITIES: Extension collaborates with many community and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. The expansion plan for 4-H Wildlife Stewards will build on and expand such collaborations and position OSU as a collaborating partner rather than a competitor. A business Program plan will be developed and reviewed for approval by May 2006.

Product Sales: The 4-H Wildlife Stewards Program currently has a large portfolio of curriculum materials, resources and products that will be available for sale to schools, state Extension Partners and education groups. A market analysis of the value of these materials will be developed and a retail price will be set. A graphic artist will be contracted to design a product sales catalog which will be available both on-line and in a printed brochure. An OSU business student intern will be hired to conduct the market analysis and marketing plan for the product sales.

The 4-H Wildlife Stewards Website which includes an on-line course, searchable databases, on-line registrations, volunteer hours on-line log sheet and other special features will be available for purchase to new “State Extension Partners” who join the new national network. The development of this website model has cost over $30,000. Web Designer, Kelly Wildman, will develop a price structure and market analysis for states to purchase this already developed site and adapt it to meet their local needs.

Contracts: Contracts will come in two forms to the program – government agencies within Oregon and contracts with new State Extension partners. Many government agencies and groups have been supportive of the 4-H Wildlife Stewards program in the past including but not limited to school districts, US Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Fish and Wildlife, Metro Regional Government, Portland Parks and Recreation, Bureau of Environmental Services, Portland Public Schools, PGE, etc. These government organizations will be invited to become a partner with 4-H Wildlife Stewards by including in their annual budget funds to support the 4-H Wildlife Stewards Program.

These organizations will be recruited as partners through a two-step process. School principals, school district grounds staff and science staff, environmental educators from both non-profit and government agencies, and community partner staff from the Portland Metro area will be invited to a 4-H Wildlife Stewards “School Wildlife Gardens Celebration Tour” in May 2006. The 4-H Wildlife Stewards currently has a database of over 800 individuals who represent these groups. The tour will include a tour of 5 schools, a morning welcoming reception and a closing luncheon. At the end of the tour, each of the participants will be asked to complete a survey of their commitment to encouraging their organization to join as a partner to 4-H. In late summer a wine and cheese reception will be hosted for school district...
superintendents and the heads of the local government organizations such as Metro Regional Government, City Council, Parks and Recreation, etc. At the conclusion of the reception, government agency partners will be invited to join as a partner to OSU 4-H by including annual funding for the program in their budgets.

State Extension programs will also be recruited as 4-H Wildlife Stewards state partners. A promotional package which includes a program summary and impact statements as well a price list of products and services will be marketed across the country. The price list will include the cost of purchasing the curriculum, resources, the on-line course, and the website. Additionally, the cost of training staff to implement this program will be included in the price list. Training cost will include the option of attending a national training here in Oregon or an on-site training in their part of the country. Follow-up contracts will also be available for purchase. These contracts will allow State partners to consult with OSU Extension project staff on project implementation and development in their local area. State partners will be able to contract with OSU Extension to purchase any or all of these services.

Sponsorships: 4-H Wildlife Stewards will seek to secure eight $25,000 sponsorships from corporations, businesses, and other national agencies. In the fall of 2006 a dinner banquet will be launched as a recruitment tool for securing private and corporate sponsors. OSU Foundation will be contacted as a partner for this effort and dignitaries from OSU will be invited as well as potential sponsors. A representative from National Science Foundation has agreed to attend and serve as a guest speaker.

Grants: Program staff will continue to secure and manage grants from a variety of sources to fund special initiatives within the program.

Fees for Service: Beginning in fall 2006 4-H Wildlife Stewards Member Schools and 4-H Wildlife Steward volunteers will be required to pay an annual re-enrollment fee. This fee will allow them to purchase 4-H Wildlife Stewards curriculum and materials at discounted rates and to receive access to the 4-H Wildlife Stewards website. The website will be changed to allow certain very popular pages of the site such as “grants and resources”, “creating your habitat”, “education tools” and “managing your site” only accessible to enrolled volunteers and member schools through a password. The 4-H Wildlife Stewards Basic training fee will be reevaluated and priced to reflect a closer true cost of the training including staff time and travel. School specific on-site teacher trainings (3 hour training) will also be available for a fee. Member schools will be encouraged to send new volunteers to the 4-H Wildlife Stewards trainings each year in order to ensure project sustainability at their school. They will also be encouraged to enlist the support of their parent teacher organizations to budget and pay for the annual re-enrolment fees and the volunteer training fees.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PLAN: The evaluation of this project will focus on the following:
1. The success and effectiveness of the business plan implementation in each of the 5 funding areas
2. The success and effectiveness of new and established OSU support systems for securing and managing new funding opportunities.
3. A preliminary evaluation of the program developed in other states as a result of the national dissemination, with an emphasis on testing the degree of fit of the program model as the program unfolds in other areas of the country.
4. A documentation of the skills, knowledge, resources and time needed by Extension faculty to secure new funding sources.

Project staff will develop protocol and data collection instruments in April- May 2006 and data collection will begin immediately. In the spring of 2007 data collection will be wrapped up and the final analysis will be conducted and a final report written.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE: "Rebirth, renewal, and rightsizing!" These three words are all too familiar depictions of organizational changes occurring in the U.S. Cooperative Extension System (Harriman & Daugherty, 1992). Factors such as advances in technology, changes in the numbers and types of clientele, increased operating costs, and reduced funding require significant changes in resource allocations, organizational structure, and the way Extension conducts its business. As predicted by Harriman and Daugherty, the future of the Cooperative Extension System will be significantly different from the past. Extension staff today are challenged by having to adapt to changes at a much faster rate. Extensions success in the future will rely on Extension staff having the necessary tools and skills to implement and adapt to these changes. The time has come for Extension to explore new areas for generating revenue to sustain and expand Extension Program. Funding through an OSU Innovative grant to support these efforts is a first step toward change.
BUDGET

Staff

Program Assistant (0.25 FTE)
Salary @ $13.00/hour $6760
FTE @ 41% $2772
(See position description below)

Business Student Internship Stipend
(to consult on business plan and conduct market analysis) $2500

Contracts

Graphic Artist Designer $2800
(to design promotional materials and product sales catalog)

Web Designer $3000
(to develop an on-line payment tool and product sales catalog)

Printing
(promotional and marketing materials) $3000

TOTAL $19,832

PROGRAM ASSISTANT POSITION

☐ Coordinate the logistics of the May 2006 school tour
☐ Coordinate the logistics of the Partner Agency wine and cheese reception
☐ Assist with coordinating the logistics of the Sponsor Donor banquet
☐ Maintain database of partners, sponsors and state Extension contacts
☐ Coordinate all marketing mailings

REFERENCES
