

Introduction to Extension Program Planning

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(A concise guide for students, practitioners, and anyone new to designing extension programs)

1. What Is an Extension Program?

Aspect	Description
Definition	A systematic set of activities that deliver knowledge, skills, or services to a target community outside formal institutions (e.g., agricultural, health, community development, youth, or technology outreach).
Purpose	• Transfer research-based innovations to end-users • Empower beneficiaries to solve local problems • Build sustainable capacity and improve quality of life
Typical Sponsors	Universities, government agencies, NGOs, private sector, farmer cooperatives, health ministries, etc.
Key Stakeholders	• Beneficiaries (farmers, families, students...) • Extension agents/educators • Researchers • Funding bodies • Local institutions (schools, cooperatives, NGOs)

2. Core Principles of Effective Planning

Principle	Practical Implication
Participatory	Involve beneficiaries from problem identification to evaluation.
Needs-Based	Base the program on a clear, data-driven assessment of community needs.
Evidence-Based	Use proven technologies or practices; adapt them to local conditions.
Sustainability	Design for continuation after external support ends (e.g., local ownership, income-generating components).
Gender-Responsive & Inclusive	Ensure equal access and address specific barriers faced by women, youth, persons with disabilities, etc.

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Principle

Practical Implication

Scalable & Replicable	Structure activities so they can be expanded or transferred to other areas.
Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	Integrate M&E from day one to track progress and inform adjustments.

3. Step-by-Step Planning Process

3.1. Pre-Planning (Context Scan)

1. **Stakeholder Mapping** – Identify individuals/organizations with interest or influence.
2. **Situational Analysis** – Use tools such as SWOT, PESTEL, or a simple community profile (demographics, livelihoods, existing services).
3. **Baseline Data Collection** – Surveys, focus groups, key-informant interviews, secondary data.

3.2. Problem Definition & Goal Setting

Element	Tips
Problem Statement	Write a concise, specific statement linking the identified need to its impact.
Goal	Broad, long-term outcome (e.g., “Increase sustainable rice yields among smallholder farmers in District X”).
Objectives	SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound. Break the goal into 2–4 concrete objectives.

3.3. Design of Interventions

Component	What to Include
Content	Technical package, curricula, demonstration modules.
Delivery Methods	Workshops, field days, farmer field schools, radio/TV, mobile apps, peer-to-peer learning, demonstration plots.

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Component	What to Include
Frequency & Duration	Number of sessions, length of each, overall timeline.
Resources Needed	Human (extension agents, trainers), material (kits, seed, pamphlets), financial, infrastructure.
Partnerships	Leverage existing networks (cooperatives, local NGOs, extension services).

3.4. Implementation Planning

1. **Work Plan / Gantt Chart** – List activities, responsible parties, start/end dates, milestones