

WHAT IS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?

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Community development is an essential component of county Extension education. To successfully incorporate community development into their programs, county agents and their supervisors need to recognize and define what is—and what is not—encompassed in community and economic development.

There are many possible definitions of community development. In 2017, the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP), part of the Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP), adopted the global definition of community development proposed by the International Association for Community Development (IACD). NACDEP also adopted a statement describing Extension professionals' role in the community development process (see box below). Both the definition and the Extension statement are consistent with the Extension Professionals' Creed. Agents and specialists encourage broad participation as communities define and implement improvement strategies. They may also provide technical assistance, including industry knowledge, data analysis, networking, or evaluation.

Definition of Community Development: Community development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, equality, economic opportunity, and social justice through the organization, education, and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings (NACDEP).

Statement of Extension Professionals' role in Community Development: Community Resources & Economic Development (CRED) Extension Professionals work WITH communities to support activities that encourage broad participation and result in social, environmental, and economic improvement, as defined by the community (<http://www.nacdep.net/what-is-community-development->).

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There are many avenues for Extension agents to address community development in the course of their assigned program areas. Figure 1 provides a practical definition of community development for local programming. This definition was formulated to be generally accepted from an academic perspective, and at the same time, be understandable and valuable to county Extension agents and their supervisors.

Figure 1 outlines three primary types of resources available in a community:

- ▶ **Economic resources:** Businesses, jobs, and more.
- ▶ **Human resources:** The skills and other contributions of the people living in the community.
- ▶ **Physical, natural, and cultural resources:** The resources of the natural environment, as well as those that are man-made, such as streets, hospitals, and more.

Extension educational programs could be created in a community to *develop* resources in one or more of these categories. In addition, many Extension programs overlap two or more resource categories. For example: A vegetable growing program might include business training related to cottage foods, finances, or marketing. Many youth programs include job skills training.

Agents can also facilitate discussion of community issues by bringing together groups representing different resources. For example: A new playground would not only be an addition to a community's physical, natural, and cultural resources, but when put into use for recreation, it would also be an enhancement for the area's families or human resources.

These types of multiple-resource community development issues are shown in the sections divided by dashed lines in Figure 1. The dashed lines indicate that the focus for any specific issue (or issues) are not rigid. For example: In a specific county, entrepreneurship could have more of an environmental focus than a people focus. However, in all cases it will likely involve both to some extent. Furthermore, programming should be tailored to fit a

community's racial, ethnic, and class composition needs. The critical point is that this definition can help agents associate community issues with outcome-oriented (i.e., goals and objectives) programming.

Examples of possible goals and objectives for each resource and focus area are listed in Table 1. Once a community's issues have been defined and goals set, Extension professionals may visit <https://communities.tamu.edu/> for links to resources within each of these capitals (these resources change frequently). Extension educational resources (such as Business Retention and Expansion publications), which can be employed to help reach community development goals, can also be accessed here.

From this perspective, in Extension educational programming, human resources and their development are a constant. The differences occur in emphasis and focus on the other resources in various combinations for community development. These differences reflect a community's

various issues and programming possibilities. Therefore, goals and objectives are not specified in this area in Table 1.

An example of an issue addressed in a community development program is the economy (i.e., jobs, income). A goal for addressing the issue could be to increase the number of high-quality jobs in a community. A locally practical way to achieve this goal may be to retain and expand existing businesses.

However, as indicated in Figure 1, other strategies could also be used to achieve the goal—including workforce development, entrepreneurship, or ecotourism programming. Goals and strategies can also be adapted to align and be consistent with the agency's strategic plan.

This publication updates Dr. Greg Taylor's 2009 *What is Community Development?* publication (D-1449, 04/2009). Dr. Taylor retired in 2010.

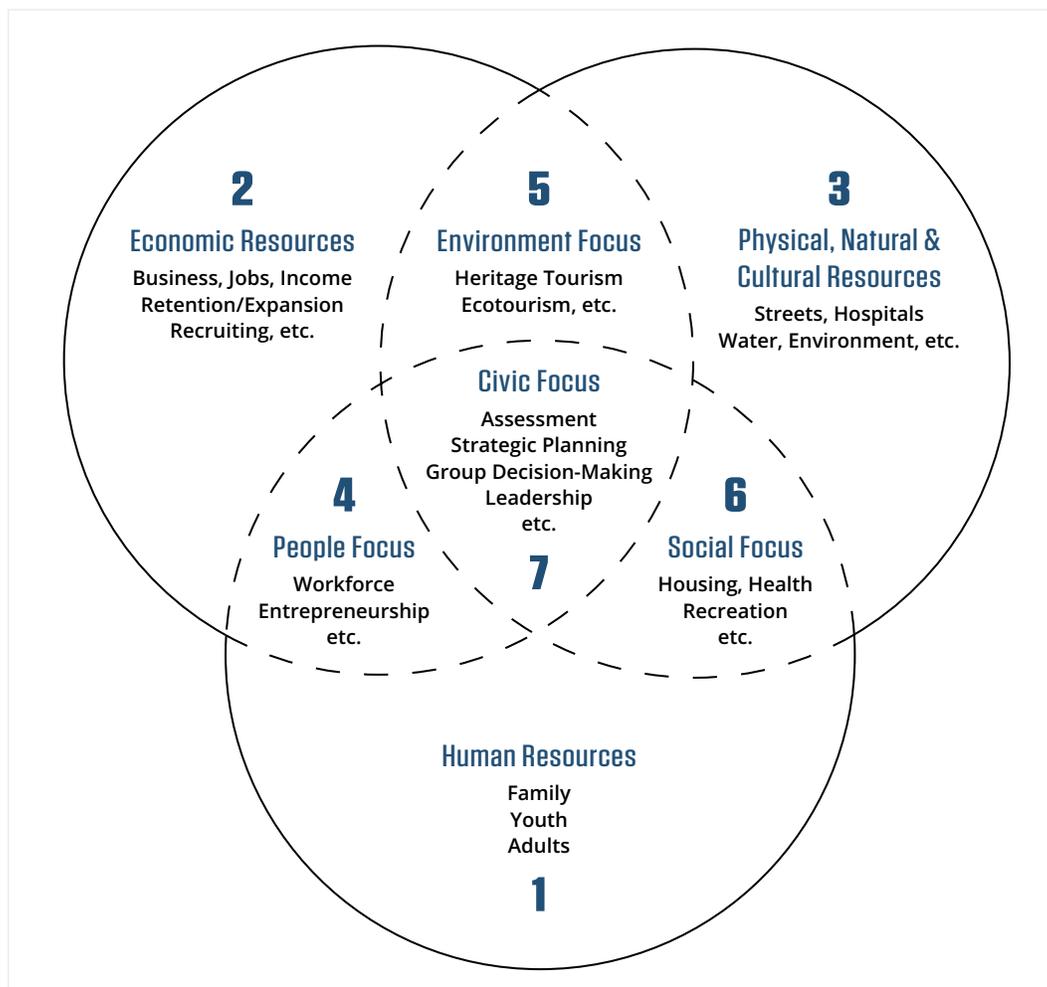


Figure 1: Community Development. The dashed lines indicate that the focus for any specific issue (or issues) are not rigid. Other strategies could also be used to achieve the goal. Goals and strategies can also be adapted to align and be consistent with the agency's strategic plan.

Table 1: Community Development Goals and Objectives

| Focus/Resource | Goals | Possible Objectives |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Human | Develop self-efficacy, knowledge, and interpersonal skills in youth and adults. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Cultivate healthy living habits ▶ Develop leadership skills ▶ Stimulate youth interest in science ▶ Create family disaster preparedness plans |
| Economic | Sustain existing levels and create additional economic activity (i.e., jobs, businesses, income streams). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Retain and expand existing businesses ▶ Recruit new businesses and industry from elsewhere ▶ Plug the leaks that cause capital and profits to leave the community |
| Physical, Natural, and Cultural | <p>Connect the community with distant markets.</p> <p>Ensure public health and safety.</p> <p>Preserve and enhance the natural, cultural, and historic environment.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure that adequate water, sewer, and other utilities exist ▶ Provide transportation and telecommunications services to link the community with distant markets ▶ Build community consensus on appropriate land and environmental uses |
| Labor | Create a high-skill and high-value workforce, with enterprising, knowledgeable entrepreneurs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Upgrade the skills of adult workers and keep them at competitive levels ▶ Provide under-skilled adults with strong, job-specific skills, linking training and work ▶ Develop new value-added business enterprises ▶ Promote entrepreneurship |
| Environment | Create economic enterprises using locally appropriate management of natural, historical, and cultural resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop heritage, cultural, and ecotourism opportunities ▶ Consider the environmental consequences of development activities |
| Social | Ensure strong human and social services to support working people, families, and those in need. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide for adequate child and elder care ▶ Provide recreational outlets for all ages ▶ Foster the development of affordable housing |
| Civic | Build a visionary, accountable and inclusive culture of civic decision making and problem-solving. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure open, competent, and accessible governmental and civic institutions ▶ Deepen and broaden the leadership pool across ethnic, class, and age groups ▶ Promote participation in civic affairs by all sectors of the community |

Capitals framework adapted from: Emery, M. & Flora, C.B. (2006). Spiraling-Up: Mapping Community Transformation with Community Capitals Framework. Community Development: Journal of the Community Development Society, 37, 19-35 (Spring).