



Title: Programming to Reach New Audiences: The Process

Name: Ellen Smoak

Email: smoak@ncat.edu

Organization: NCA&T State University/Cooperative Extension

State: NC **Region:** Southern

Year of Funding:

Theme: Pollution Assessment and Prevention

Situation: Programming for limited-resource audiences (people having low educational attainment and literacy skills) is a challenge that is becoming increasingly more important given the demographic paradigm shift. Water quality and efforts to protect it transcend race, religion, color, economic status, or political persuasion. Water quality is everyone's responsibility. Limited-resource adults typically avoid participation in educational programs because they represent another opportunity for failure.

Objectives: To increase limited-resource learner participation in water quality educational programs. To develop an understanding of the barriers to participation. To develop, test and evaluate program pieces designed to overcome those barriers. To measure behavior change among limited-resource learners resulting from their participation in these programs. To use results to modify program pieces.

Methods: The development of educational pieces avoided a learner-teacher format; hands-on learning is emphasized and reinforced using personal experiences and insights as much as possible. Pieces developed address a variety of learning styles appropriate for the target audience. These include a publication titled Curious About Water (1997, Williamson and Smoak), a visually interactive water flow map and a series of 23 voluntary take-home water quality assessments.

Partnerships: NCSU provided financial support, review and marketing of products, and assistance with program implementation. NRCS provided technical review of pieces. County Extension Centers provide contacts for additional information.

Research: A statewide needs assessment was conducted to help determine specific water quality concerns and the potential impacts they have on the target audience. The educational pieces developed were based on current water quality publications as well as external training received by the project developers. Program content is aimed at providing learners with need-to-know instead of good-to-know information. Extension field faculty is primarily responsible for program outreach.

Resources: Internal CSREES funding supported program design and production. The project evolved as a collaborative effort with NCSU who provided a portion of the financial and technical support. Additional funding came via EPA and USDA grants.

Results: Knowledge by limited-resource learners increased. Based on our experiences in working with the target audience, we developed a strategy to modify existing materials. Field testing and subsequent program success led to 3 national program awards. Presently, based on the success of the program, additional funding and support have been leveraged via the NCSU Water Quality Group to expand and further modify the project to achieve long-term effects.



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