



USDA-CSREES 2007 National Water Quality Conference

[Addressing Educational Complexities in Extension Programs](#)

How can water quality educational programs be designed to fully engage participants in learning that is relevant to their needs? What tools are available for educators to produce programs that are both flexible and structured? The purpose of this poster is to present a method for educational program design that aims to increase participant capacity to address real world concerns. The primary objective of the iSNAP Water Quality Education Project is to provide educational programming and supporting resources to agricultural professionals and growers on innovative nutrient and pest management practices that can protect water quality, improve farm profitability, and comply with environmental regulations. The challenge for the project is to enable participants to learn how to farm productively while integrating cropping practices, such as site preparation, planting date, method and timing of nutrient and pesticide applications, with environmental concern, such as water and air quality and wildlife protection. Developing these state of the art skills is not an easy task and requires the understanding and use of decision tools and models. To better address these complexities the project has adopted an outcome-based education (OBE) approach. The six steps of developing an OBE program acknowledge the interconnectedness of different disciplines and are based on real context and situations. Using an OBE design helps to ensure the learning experiences will enable the participants to more effectively manage site-specific pest and nutrient management options and reduce environmental risks, particularly those that affect water quality. To continue to the refinement of the programs, an evaluation plan is integrated to capture program impacts and participant feedback.

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