



# Concept Proposal: Global Academy for Extension Practice

## Background

The issues of food availability, accessibility, and affordability loom ever larger around the world. As populations continue to grow, emerging societies demand diets with more variety and higher levels of protein, vitamins, and minerals. The challenge to improving standards of living includes achieving food self-sufficiency while substantially increasing human productivity in the food production sector. At a recent United Nations Food Summit, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the world needs to produce 50 percent more food by 2030 to meet rising demand. The Secretary also noted the “historic opportunity to revitalize agriculture, especially in countries where productivity gains have been low in recent years.”

Such words are a call to action. Developing social and human capital as well as infrastructure will be highly correlated with success in meeting the world’s food needs. The application of technologies coupled with appropriately evolved educational methods will describe the salience of the challenge.

In developed countries such as the United States, the agricultural extension services and the land-grant universities have been the cornerstone of developing necessary human and social capital. Yet in many countries the extension systems either have not developed or have floundered, likely due to a number of factors, including the following.

- Professional development processes do not emphasize the application of new technology.
- End users do not trust the Ministries of Agriculture or Finance, NGOs, or corporate or land-grant service providers because these providers have not learned to speak the end users’ language.
- The gap between research and practice leaves an even larger gap in the agricultural value chain including food, fiber, fuel, and pharmaceutical production.



In addition, few extension specialists have adequate training in several areas, including

- teaching scientific subject matter to purely practical people;
- communication processes;
- adult learning processes;
- marketing;
- guiding behavior change among extension learners;
- creating partnerships, networks, and dynamic human systems;
- structuring, organizing processes, and developing and monitoring resources;
- successfully interacting with diverse individuals and groups;
- evaluation and accountability; and
- identifying and monitoring variables and issues important to community vitality.



### Global Academy for Extension Practice

Iowa State University Extension proposes the development of a Global Academy that will address these issues and establish a set of core competencies for extension professionals around the world. Table 1 shows the proposed core competencies to be taught to extension educators.

**Table 1. Global Core Competencies**

<b>Subject Matter</b>	Mastery of or competency within a scientific discipline, a research body of knowledge, or a technical proficiency that enhances individual and organizational effectiveness
<b>Community and Social Action Processes</b>	Ability to identify and monitor variables and issues important to community vitality (e.g., demographics, economics, human services, environment), and the ability to use and apply these variables to program prioritization, planning, and delivery
<b>Educational Programming</b>	Ability to plan, design, implement, evaluate, account for, and market significant extension education programs that improve quality of life for extension learners
<b>Engagement</b>	Ability to recognize, understand, and facilitate opportunities and to broker the necessary resources that best respond to the needs of individuals and communities
<b>Information and Education Delivery</b>	Mastery of communication skills (such as written and verbal), application of technology, and delivery methods for supporting educational programs and guiding behavior change among extension learners
<b>Interpersonal Relations</b>	Ability to successfully interact with diverse individuals and groups to create partnerships, networks, and dynamic human systems
<b>Knowledge of Organization</b>	An understanding of the history, philosophy, and contemporary nature of extension
<b>Leadership</b>	Ability to positively influence a wide range of diverse individuals and groups
<b>Organizational Management</b>	Ability to establish structure, organize processes, develop and monitor resources, and lead change to obtain educational outcomes effectively and efficiently
<b>Professionalism</b>	Demonstration of behaviors that reflect high levels of performance, a strong work ethic, and a commitment to continuing education and to the mission, vision, and goals of extension



## Potential Modules for the Global Academy for Extension Practice

- 1 Building Client Trust
- 2 Involving People in the Business of Extension
- 3 The Critical Process of Needs Clarification
- 4 The Concept and Process of Major Programs
- 5 The Creative Process of Extension Dialogue
- 6 Multiple Roles of Extension Staff
- 7 Potential Extension Teaching Methods
- 8 Teaching Behaviors
- 9 Recognizing Principles of Adult Learning
- 10 Characteristics of Adult Learners
- 11 Using the Reflective Judgment Model
- 12 Domains and Levels of Learning
- 13 Motivational Strategies for Extension Educators
- 14 Evaluation Methodologies

## Project Structure

- ISU Extension will be the hub for process development, recruitment, curriculum design, communication, monitoring, evaluation, and administration of the process.
- ISU Extension will recruit several Regional Centers (two to four in the beginning of the project). Each center will be responsible for selecting four to six countries from which to recruit and train extension specialists using the Core Competency Curriculum provided through ISU Extension.
- Regional centers will access and recruit curriculum designers to localize the ISU Extension Core Competency curriculum.
- ISU Extension will recruit and train regional facilitators (either electronically or face-to-face) in using a dialogue process with their local participants.
- Regional centers will be responsible for managing their own training facilities with funding outside the project budget.
- ISU Extension will develop and administer a comprehensive evaluation and accountability process for the project and will disseminate these results throughout the Global Extension Community.

## Timeline

**Year 1** of the Global Academy for Extension Practice will involve

- curriculum design and development by ISU Extension;
- recruitment visits by global staff from ISU Extension to regional sites for selection and initial training, plus administrative set up and logistics training of Regional Center personnel; and
- design of formative evaluation and assessment tools and protocol.

**Years 2, 3, 4** will involve each Regional Center

- recruiting countries they will serve,
- establishing training protocols with their selected countries,
- coordinating visits to each country that center will serve;
- hosting site visits by Global Academy staff for program coordination;
- delivering training seminars to selected country participants; and
- developing training seminars to manage and deliver six training modules per each year of the project (three seminars per semester). Seminars will consist of three full-day sessions with morning and afternoon workshops per seminar. At completion each participant will have experienced a minimum of 18 training modules.

Each country is expected to recruit, finance, and evaluate the performance and short-term results of 30 to 50 participants per each year of training. Each participant will be expected to participate in two training seminars per each year of the project and be committed to complete the three-year training regimen. Each participant who completes the training will become certified as an Academy Fellow.

In **year 5** the Regional Centers will conduct accountability visits to evaluate program effectiveness. They will measure knowledge, skills, attitude, and aspiration gain of participants along with behavioral practice adoption and projected 10-year impacts.



**After year 5**, the Global Academy will develop continuing education seminars for Regional Center staff and faculty. They will learn how to regionalize the content and process so they can conduct continuing education seminars at their sites for those gaining Academy Fellow status during the first phase of the project. Fellows will be required to participate in at least one three-day continuing education seminar every two years to retain their certification as Academy Fellows.



## References

Fatka, J. (2008). "U.N. food conference skirts biofuels, biotech." *Feedstuffs*, Minnetonka, MN, USA. June 9, 2008.

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