Curriculum Review Process

Purpose

The purpose of the curriculum review process within Iowa State University Extension and Outreach is to maintain consistent standards of quality and credibility. This process is intended for curricula that have not undergone internal review by one of the four ISU Extension and Outreach program areas. Curricula developed elsewhere may not be applicable to the state of Iowa for some reason such as climate, state law, general practices, or other valid reason. This policy is meant to assure the appropriateness and permissions to use curricula from other sources. County Services may initiate or request that a curriculum be reviewed by the appropriate program area.

Process

Curriculum review is the evaluation of the group of planned educational offerings and follows a process based on science and appropriate methodologies, uses a peer approval process, is evaluated and updated periodically, and respects the dates that program materials are scheduled to be discontinued.

Types

Curricula may come to ISU Extension and Outreach through adoption, adaptation, or development.

- **Adopt**: Legally using ("adopting") a curriculum, resource, or tool from another entity (e.g., land-grant university) for use within the state of Iowa. The curriculum is not changed in any way, including the branding of the materials (e.g., the materials retain the information of the author/owner).
- **Adapt**: Legally adapting a curriculum from another entity (e.g., land-grant university) for use within the state of Iowa. The needed adaptations should be minimal and/or pertain only to Iowa-specific issues (e.g., laws, regulations, etc.). If the curriculum requires major adaptations for use in Iowa, then development should be considered.
- **Develop**: Developing a curriculum with original content not addressed by another entity and that is **uniquely** original and innovative. The decision to develop may result from a needs assessment, research/academic work, partnership with another educational institution, professional organization, or public agency/partner.

It is expected that all ISU Extension and Outreach staff will adopt or adapt a curriculum when possible. Development should occur only if no viable curriculum exists from another entity and/or permission for its use cannot be obtained. Curricula are to be

adopted or adapted only from credible entities and must be research- or evidence-based. Examples of credible entities include:

- Land-grant universities
- State extension systems
- Government agencies (for websites, those that end in .gov)
- "Gold star" agencies—a non-university, non-governmental, non-commercial/business agency or organization respected and known within a specific discipline (examples include the American Psychological Association and the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority)

ISU Extension and Outreach must have the legal right to use materials from another source. Unless expressly noted that materials are able to be freely used for educational purposes by the author and/or owner of the materials, the default assumption is that permission must be obtained before any use of any part of the curriculum, no matter how small (e.g., one activity, one handout, one publication, etc.). This permission will need to be obtained in writing as part of the curriculum review process.

In accordance with the ISU Digital Accessibility policy, any curriculum or portion thereof that ISU Extension and Outreach offers in a digital format, must be digitally accessible. If the entity is unable to provide digitally accessible content, it will be the responsibility of the programmatic area to obtain access to original content. Program leaders should thoroughly vet the program and complete needs assessment before contracting to remediate.

All curricula used within ISU Extension and Outreach, whether adopted, adapted, or developed, must undergo a curriculum review process. The program units of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, Human Sciences, and Community and Economic Development all have a curriculum review process (although it may be referred to in different terms) tailored to meet the needs of the different disciplines. The program leaders may waive the curriculum review process in times of disaster or other local or state emergencies.

Human Sciences Extension and Outreach

Process: The curriculum review process used within Human Sciences Extension and Outreach is called the Educational Offerings Lifecycle Process. Within this document, the staff process outlined in the Responsive Offerings Process also applies to county staff (p. 10), who would be operating as the project leader. The point of contact for the county staff initiating the Responsive Offerings Process is the appropriate human sciences specialist. The human sciences specialist will then assist with guiding the process, including using the flow chart and Educational Offering Request for Approval form (p. 15). Just as occurs within the unit, not all requests will be approved. Please refer to the referenced pages and documents for specifics on the process.

Timeline: The timeline for the decision related to approval or denial of the request will vary depending upon numerous factors.

- Adopting a curriculum from another entity can be easy and quick if the author/owner has designated it for educational use and depending upon the scope of the curriculum. However, obtaining permission to adopt another entity's curriculum or materials can be a lengthy process, requiring a contractual agreement between the entity and ISU Extension and Outreach.

  The timeframe could vary from one day to several weeks or even months, depending upon the legal implications and scope of content.

- Adapting a curriculum created and owned by Human Sciences Extension and Outreach will usually take the least amount of time. However, it must be recognized that adapting a Human Sciences Extension and Outreach curriculum is not always possible, depending upon factors such as grant funding, the science supporting the content, or the intention of the creator.

  The timeframe could vary from one day to several weeks or even months, depending upon the amount of adaptations to the curriculum.

- Adapting a curriculum created by another entity can be easy and quick if the author/owner has designated it for educational use and depending upon the scope of the curriculum. However, obtaining permission to adapt another entity's curriculum or materials can be a lengthy process, requiring a contractual agreement between the entity and ISU Extension and Outreach.

  The timeframe could vary from one day to several weeks or even months, depending upon the legal implications, scope of content, and the amount of adaptations to the curriculum.

- Developing a new curriculum will require vetting as outlined in the Responsive Offerings Process. The project leader (e.g., county staff) responds appropriately throughout the creative and development process to concerns voiced by their supervisor, the appropriate human sciences expert, and the human sciences creative projects specialist. If any of these three individuals is not supportive, the process ends.

  The timeframe could vary from several weeks or even months, depending upon legal implications (as just one example, ensuring a title for a curriculum may be used requires a copyright search and approval from legal) and scope of content.

4-H Youth Development

Process: The curriculum review process used within 4-H Youth Development is part of the 4-H Educational Program and Resource Development Process. Within 4-H, educational program and resource development is defined as any program, curriculum, process, or material that has been systemized for delivery to a 4-H audience in order to reach programmatic goals. Iowa 4-H Youth Development follows the National 4-H Curriculum Philosophical Framework. Whether developed by a county, Iowa State

University, or acquired from another source (e.g., external land-grant university, National 4-H, community partner), all educational programs and resources must first meet the [Iowa 4-H vetting criteria](#) before implementation.

In consultation with 4-H youth program specialists, county 4-H youth professionals will meet the Iowa 4-H vetting criteria when implementing county-based youth programs. 4-H youth development professionals who have educational resources they would like reviewed and considered for broad use should use the 4-H program inquiry form.

Timeline: The timeline for the educational resource development process will depend on whether the resource is being adopted, adapted, or developed by Iowa 4-H youth development professionals.

The educational resource review process is conducted by a 4-H educational program priority team (STEM, 4-H Agriculture and Natural Resources, Civic Engagement and Leadership, Communication and the Arts, and Healthy Living) comprised of 4-H state and county staff based on the educational content of the program or resource being reviewed. Teams review the educational program or resource and complete or review the submission form to assess whether an educational resource meets the Iowa 4-H criteria for usage. If it is not approved for use, the review team will respond to the submitter with recommended edits to receive approval or recommend an alternative educational resource that has been approved to use.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Process: The curriculum review process within Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) is handled on a case-by-case basis. Curriculum internally adopted, adapted, or developed by ANR faculty or staff is approved by the associated Plan of Work (POW) team responsible for the subject area. Any curriculum that is being considered for adoption, adaptation, or development outside of the ANR POW team processes should be reviewed. The curriculum should be submitted to the appropriate POW team leader and co-leader to evaluate with electronic copies sent to the ANR director and assistant director. The POW team will evaluate the appropriateness of the material for Iowa. Considerations will include availability of similar existing ANR curriculum, environmental considerations, state law, market issues, and the appropriateness of the fit with the need of the given audience. If the curriculum does not fit with any POW team, the review process will be administered by the ANR director by selecting specific faculty and staff to provide a review.

Timeline: The response time will depend on the magnitude of the curriculum, but every effort will be made to complete the review within two months.

Community and Economic Development

The Community and Economic Development (CED) unit will review curricula proposed to be adopted or adapted from another entity, or newly developed curricula, that falls within the community development areas of expertise held by CED specialists at the time. Currently CED is comprised of four Knowledge Teams (1) Local Economies; (2) Community Engagement and Equity; (3) Local Government and Housing; and (4) Data and Technology. The extension educator proposing to use an adapted or developed curriculum is encouraged to contact the CED director or an assistant director with questions about the applicability of a given curriculum to CED's curriculum review process. The extension educator, and not CED staff, will be responsible for obtaining the legal right to use materials adopted or adapted from another source.

The process is initiated by contacting the CED regional point of contact (RPC) for a county in which the extension educator proposes to use the curriculum. The contact information for the RPC can be found on the county office website. After consulting with the CED director and/or an assistant director, the RPC will forward the curriculum to the appropriate CED Knowledge Team for its review. The review will be limited to the accuracy of data and information in the curriculum, and to the degree to which it reflects current, best research-based practices in the field. The review will not address the adult-learning methods utilized in the curriculum, although the Knowledge Team may provide suggestions gleaned from its own experience.

Typically, the review process will be expedited (within 30 days of submission), particularly for curriculum adopted from a research university, state extension system, government, or gold-star agency. The process may take longer if the curriculum addresses a substantive content area in which the Knowledge Team does not routinely work. In these cases, the chair of the Knowledge Team will reach out to non-extension ISU experts or, if necessary, experts outside of ISU, and may ask the extension educator for recommendations for external reviewer(s).

The review will result in one of three recommendations: (1) approve as written; (2) approve with recommended revisions; or (3) not recommended for use. In the case of (2) or (3), the Knowledge Team will provide the extension educator with substantive, research-based rationale for its recommendation.

Curriculum Review Process Definitions

Program

A program is the planned dissemination of research- or evidence- based knowledge intended to meet a public need. Examples may include farm management, leadership development, mental health for youth, or parenting. Often, the words "program" and "curriculum" are used interchangeably. For communicating with the public, this is

acceptable practice. Within ISU Extension and Outreach, "program" is assigned the broader definition above.

Program Planning

Program planning is used to identify and develop priority programs and prioritize funding to meet the needs of Iowans.

Program Development

The program development process includes the selection of curricula or other resources, products, and tools (examples include apps, publications, social media, websites, etc.) that facilitate program implementation. Therefore, program development follows a process based on science and appropriate methodologies, uses a peer approval process, is evaluated and updated periodically, and respects the dates that program materials are scheduled to be discontinued.

Program Catalog

A program catalog is a list of programs that include curricula or other resources, products, and tools available to Iowans through ISU Extension and Outreach.

Curriculum

A curriculum is one aspect of a program. Any curriculum offered by ISU Extension and Outreach should be linked to the overarching program. A curriculum is designed to create a change in knowledge, behavior, or condition. A curriculum is a group of planned educational offerings offered face-to-face or virtually in a synchronous or asynchronous format, and generally includes a targeted audience, materials, exercises and activities, delivery methods, and evaluation process.

Curriculum Review

Curriculum review is the evaluation of the group of planned educational offerings with the purpose of maintaining consistent standards of quality and credibility. As an aspect of program development, curriculum review follows a process based on science and appropriate methodologies, uses a peer approval process, is evaluated and updated periodically, and respects the dates that program materials are scheduled to be discontinued.

Engagement

Engagement is the collaboration between ISU Extension and Outreach (e.g., county offices, staff, and faculty) and partners and communities in pursuit of a shared goal and

includes a give-and-take of knowledge and resources. Engagement is a broad term that may include:

- Coordination/facilitation/navigation among agencies, organizations, schools, and/or systems. ISU Extension and Outreach staff support and work with agencies, organizations, schools, and/or systems to create and facilitate procedures and processes that allow for better working relationships and improved communication in communities.
- Consultations for Iowans. ISU Extension and Outreach staff provide one-on-one consultations to address specific, individualized needs. These may take place in person, by phone, or by other individualized communication means. An example is supporting and working with individual Iowans as they learn to navigate systems by using processes and procedures that may be unusual, unfamiliar, or confusing.
- Project or process development: ISU Extension and Outreach staff may act in a guidance role to other agencies, organizations, schools, and/or systems related to a specific community project or process that is responsive to a specific community need. This may include assisting agencies, organizations, schools, and/or systems with understanding the importance of research- and evidence-based best practices and decision-making, and supporting access to data, research-based theories and literature, appropriate community-based evaluation options, or reporting or presentation possibilities.

Evidence-based

An evidence-based curriculum, resource, or tool is based on specified theory and evaluated with a randomized controlled study that shows positive outcomes.

Research-based

A curriculum, resource, or tool is based on relevant theories/research.

Needs Assessment

Needs assessment "is a specific approach that focuses on the systematic collection of data from stakeholders related to their needs or perceived needs. There are various methods that can be used to conduct a needs assessment." (Program Development and Evaluation, Understanding Context … Seeking to Understand the Issues, Opportunities, or Situation from Multiple Perspectives. https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/programdevelopment/developing-programs/understanding-context/. Accessed May 15, 2020.)

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