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SUPER

System for University Planning, Evaluation & Reporting

Needs Assessment Toolbox

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Introduction to the Needs Assessment Module

What are the needs of people? To answer this question, first and foremost, Extension professionals listen to people. They observe the needs in their lives. They examine Census data. They examine other data sources such as the local newspaper or data provided by the Chamber of Commerce. They seek strategies to involve a diverse audience.

Issues are often obvious. Three home fires in one month in one neighborhood will get everyone's attention. This provides a teachable moment for fire prevention and home safety programs. Taking advantage of such teachable moments speeds adoption of recommended safety and fire prevention practices.

Likewise, issues are just as likely to be hidden from the casual observer. The personal bankruptcy rate, for example, is one problem that people may not be willing to discuss. Affected individuals just don't stand up and say "I have a problem managing my money and I need help."

The SUPER needs assessment module has been designed to support the way Extension professionals assess needs. The SUPER needs assessment is revolutionary. The module displays key data indicators, such as those from Kids Count CLICKS or the United States Census Bureau. It allows you to produce your county profiles by base program area, topic and/or audience. It also tracks local needs identified by Extension professionals through interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and more; and allows for a statewide look at those collective local needs.

Think of SUPER as seven filing cabinets. Think of the "Planning" cabinet as having three drawers. These drawers are labeled: Individual Annual Plan, State Action Agenda and Needs Assessment. In the needs assessment drawer, there are six files: Search Needs, Enter Info, Search Data Indicators, Go to Blackboard LMS, Civil Rights Planned Participation and Civil Rights Plan (Figure 1).

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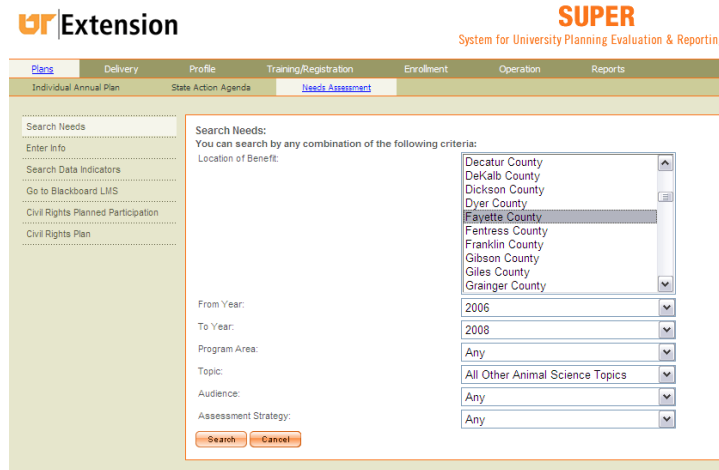**Figure 1. SUPER Needs Assessment Module**

Search Needs

In the menu, click Plans. Now click Needs Assessment in the submenu. Notice that the Search Needs tab appears. This allows you to search needs that have been previously entered into SUPER by Extension Agents who conducted local needs assessments. Begin by establishing your search criteria, like this:

Location of Benefit – select the county by clicking on the county name. Select more than one county by holding the control key at the same time you click on the names of the counties. Notice that it is possible to search across all counties by selecting the "statewide" location of benefit.

- o From Year – select the year you want to begin the search.

- o To Year – select the year you want to end the search.

- o Base Program – select the base program for your search; or search all of the base programs by using the default "any".

- o Topic – select the topic for your search; or search all of the topics by using the default "any".

- o Audience – select the audience description for your search; or search all of the audience descriptions by using the default "any".

o Assessment Strategy – select the assessment strategy for your search; or search all of the strategies by using the default "any".

Let's say you want to see the needs identified in Fayette County for 2006, 2007 and 2008 for "All Other Animal Science Topics". Notice how the search criteria is established (Figure 2) and how the results are returned in a results table (Figure 3).
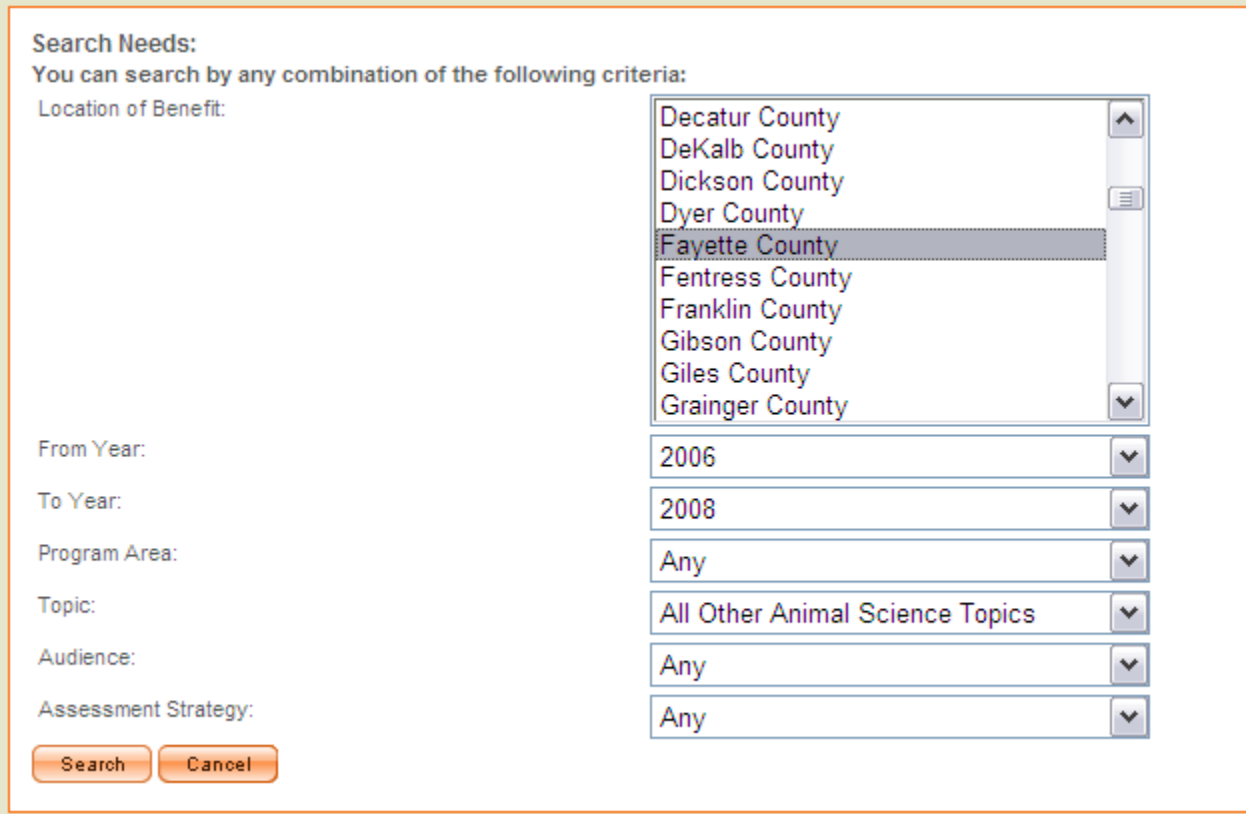

An enlarged view of the search criteria is shown below.

Figure 2. Setting Up Search Criteria

Figure 3. Search Results

The results table is organized with seven columns: location of benefit, year, program area, topic, audience, assessment strategy and need. By clicking one of the column headers, you organize the data in alpha-numeric order under the column. For example, by clicking the header "need", all of the needs are organized in alpha-numeric order. Notice that an orange triangle shows which header has been clicked (Figure 3).

Enter Info

Click Enter Info in the contents section on the left side of your screen. Notice the orange add button (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Enter Info Tab

When you click the orange add button, SUPER provides a pop-up box for you to describe your needs assessment. Enter a descriptive title if you choose. Next enter your county and other information regarding scope, such an integrated research and extension program. Now enter a target audience. The audience that you enter is the audience you intend to target with education, or the object of the needs assessment. Please do not enter three or more audience descriptions. If you have assessed the needs of more than three audiences mark only General Public. To enter two multiple audience descriptions, hold the control

key while clicking. If you do not see an applicable audience description on the lists, enter General Public. Click one or more base programs.

An example of the descriptive data entered to set-up your needs assessment is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Needs Assessment Set-Up

Do not be intimidated by the statement "Once saved, these settings can NOT be altered. Please make sure that all of the information is complete and accurate before clicking SAVE" (Figure 5). If you enter the wrong information, you are able to delete the assessment and start again. After you have clicked "Save Changes" on the needs assessment set-up screen (Figure 5), SUPER displays the title and year of your needs assessment (Figure 6). Click the plus sign to open the needs assessment. Now enter the assessment strategies
(Figure 7).

Figure 6. Needs Assessment Display

Figure 7. Needs Assessment Data Entry

You are entering the number of sessions conducted for the needs assessment strategies. In the example in Figure 7, the agent conducted two meetings with an advisory committee. The meetings are entered in the "associated with Extension" column because most of the committee members were already on one or more Extension mailing lists. If most of the committee members were not previously on Extension mailing lists, the number of sessions would be entered in the "Not Associated with Extension" column. Definitions of these needs assessment strategies are found in the definitions sections of this document. Then you enter the gender, race/ethnicity of the individuals contacted during the needs assessment. Next, type the need. The need should be one sentence. Notice the example in Figure 7: "Homeowners need education in plant selection for the home landscape." You should answer the question "Who needs what according to whom?" Knox County Homeowners represent the "who" and their needs for plant selection education answer the "what". The "according to whom" is the advisory committee.

Associate the need with at least one topic, and click "save changes". If you do not find an applicable topic, use the "all other" designation, as in "All Other Plant Sciences Topics". You may type another need, associate it with one topic, and click "save changes." Notice that if you type the need incorrectly, or select the wrong topic, you may delete the entry and start again. Please enter the one, two or three most critical needs identified. Those are the needs that will be the focus of your local educational programming, and those are the needs specialists and program leaders want to consider for region-wide and statewide planning purposes. The needs you have entered may now be accessed from the "search needs" tab.

Search Data Indicators

The feature called "search data indicators" allows you to search for indicators of community needs and assets from multiple data sources such as: United States Department of Agriculture, 4-H Enrollment Reports and the United States Census Bureau, to name a few.

Click the "search data indicators" tab. Notice the search criteria. The first criterion is searching by either county or state. Both are selected by a click. Next, select the year or years for the search. Click the box if you wish to see the closest prior years if data is not available for the years you selected. Notice the search criteria selected in Figure 8. The search criteria will produce a profile for Knox County for the years 2000 to 2007. This profile will be limited to the base program agriculture and natural resources.

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Figure 8. Needs Assessment Data Entry

By clicking search, the profile appears. A sample of the profile appears in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Profile

Notice that search may be limited by program area, audience or topic. Let's say you wanted to produce a profile of the topic "teen parents". Select topic from the "view results by" drop-down. Now select the appropriate knowledge area. Notice that you may select multiple knowledge areas. The topics associated with those knowledge area(s) are now displayed. Select the appropriate topic. Select more than one topic by holding the control (Ctrl) key on your keyboard. Now click the right arrow to move the topics to the box labeled "find data indicator for the following topic." Click Search. (See Figure 10.)
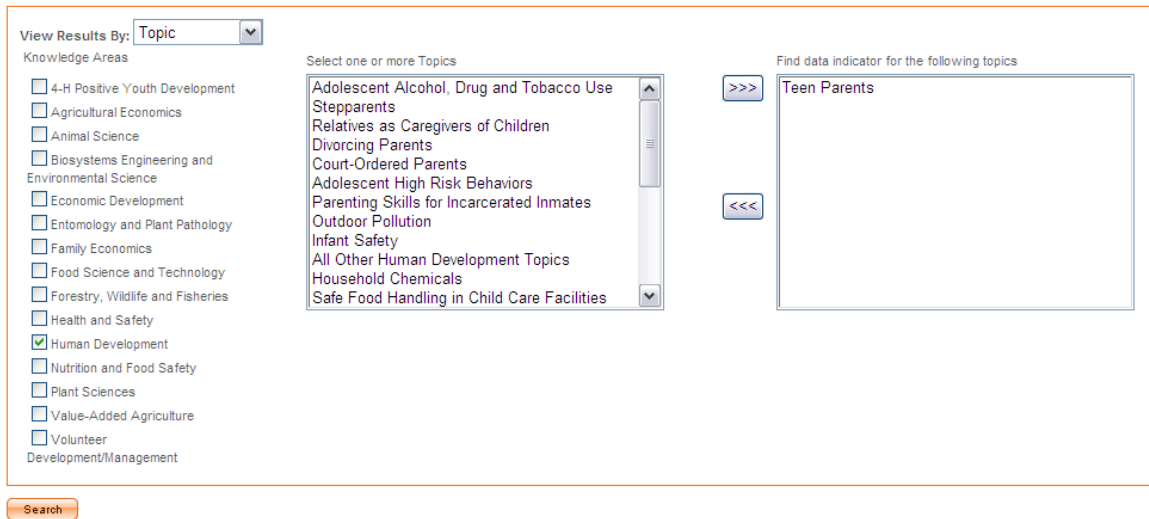

Figure 10. View Results by Topic

Let's say you wanted to produce a profile of the audience "food stamp recipients". Select audience from the "view results by" drop-down. Now select the audience description. Select more than one audience description by holding the control (Ctrl) key on your keyboard. Click Search. See Figure 10.
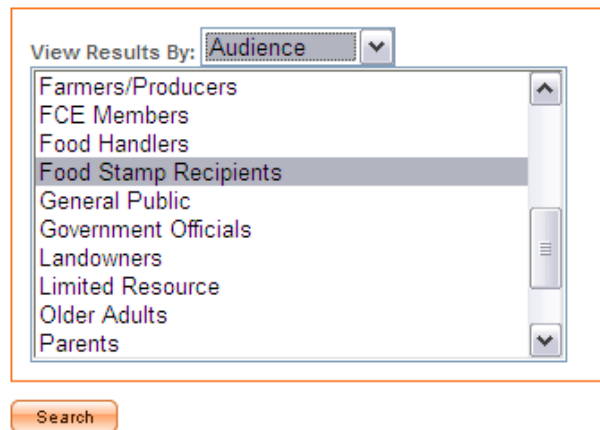

Figure 10. View Results by Topic

Civil Rights Planned Participation and Civil Rights Plan

More information will be available at a future date.

Definitions

Assessment Strategies –

o Focus Group – You invite a group of 5-7 individuals are ask leadoff questions, probing questions and follow-up to determine the needs in the community, who has those needs, and perhaps how the target audience is best reached.

o Needs Assessment Documents – This involves your review of needs assessment documents completed by government agencies or other community groups.

o Open Listening Session – Similar to an advisory committee meeting except that the session is open to all and advertised in the local media.

o Survey – Various surveys and questionnaires used to elicit needs of the community.

o Advisory Committees – A local group you organize for the purpose of providing input into the Extension program and helping to promote Extension programs and participation by diverse audiences.

o Interviews with Key Informants – Key informants are people who have specific information about a given audience or need. A nurse practitioner might be an excellent source for a community health assessment.