

**Adapting Online Extension Programming to in-Person Experiences**

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### **Introduction**

According to the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN), both the frequency in which disasters and animal health emergencies occur and the price associated with those disasters are on the rise (EDEN, 2021). To address these issues, agriculturists have been charged with understanding a variety of realistic threats to agricultural infrastructure and production. These include, but are not limited to, factors that can affect disease spread in livestock (Fadiga & Katjuongua, 2014), biosecurity, and the importance of sound management practices (Briggs, 2011). The desired outcome of this project is to provide another resource to high school aged students as well as younger adults. In addition to secondary agricultural education and senior-level 4-H programming, many states offer professional development programs for young adults directly involved with this challenge, such as Ohio Young Ag Professionals (Ohio Farm Bureau) and Young Farmers and Ranchers in Montana (Montana Farm Bureau). However, education is still dealing with the lingering effects of Covid-19 and a mass movement from in-person learning to more isolated online settings (Lemay et al., 2021).

The Covid-19 period exposed differences between online and in-person learning, especially when it came to assessment, student socialization, and student support (Delgado et al., 2022). With this in mind, face-to-face learning environments were recognized as valuable and even preferable to many adult learners. Multiple modalities will be crucial for robust extension and other adult and mature-youth programming in the future. This project seeks to offer a facilitated face-to-face group learning alternative to a successful online course in animal emergency prevention and management. EDEN's online module adaptation project is a USDA supported effort intended to address this need by converting a recently updated (2021) animal agrosecurity and emergency management course from an online individual format into an offline format with support materials to be delivered in face-to-face group settings by a secondary agricultural educator, 4-H leader, extension educator, or other qualified facilitator.

### **How it works**

Currently, EDEN's courses are designed for extension professionals who can dedicate four to six hours to an online module. The content is highly specialized and covers a wide array of potential emergencies or disasters that could affect an agricultural operation, including natural disasters such as blizzards, tornados, or earthquakes, as well as chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive (CBRNE) threats (EDEN, 2021). The goal of this project is to strategically narrow content from the online course and modify the delivery method to one more conducive to in- person group delivery, such as classrooms or workshops. First, a content analysis will be conducted on EDEN's current emergency and disaster curriculum to determine what topics can be combined, shortened, or eliminated. Once this is complete and the content is pared down, a facilitator's guidebook with learning objectives, talking points, discussion prompts, formative assessment questions, and facilitation instructions for a final activity will be developed. An accompanying learner

guidebook will also be created and will be built off of the same template, but with the talking points being guided notes and with writing spaces for reflection. A presentation will also be developed to assist in content delivery. All efforts culminate into a summative assessment activity where learners use the principles covered through the guidebook modules to solve a complex animal health scenario set on a fictitious dairy farm.

### **Results to Date/Implications**

This project is currently in its development stage, but to date, work has begun on setting specific objectives for the content that will be covered in the adapted offline course. With the increase in frequency of disasters and animal health emergencies and the prices associated with them, authentic discussions into their basis have major implications for all involved in agriculture. These discussions frame what portions of the original course will need to be kept, paraphrased, or cut out entirely, and how the objectives can be re-written to reflect those adaptations. Following this, the course will be re-evaluated unit-by-unit to determine which specific portions of text will be kept, paraphrased, or eliminated. As the current steps are completed, design elements will move into the primary workspace. Most of the needed digital assets have been secured. These include EDEN graphics, color pallets, and fonts. Work is still being done to convert the original course to a more navigable format, but regardless, the project can progress. Developing instructional templates, as well as templates for both the facilitator and learner guidebooks, will become priority in conjunction with the work of translating the original course into one more founded in face-to-face delivery methods.

### **Future Plans/Advice to Others**

Upon completion, the course will be released for use by any higher education institution or youth education programming effort. There will be no branding from specific cooperating institutions present in the materials, as they will be adopted by multiple institutions with EDEN permission. Contingent upon continued program support, data could be collected on preferred delivery method of the adapted course. Participant age, region, and background would all be useful variables to analyze to better inform any future revisions of the course. Examining time on task for specific portions of the course could also help in understanding which areas of the course need trimmed or need to receive more focus. In reality, the future of this project is largely in the hands of those who facilitate the course. The intent is to provide a ready-to-present program that agricultural and extension educators can deliver while allowing some level of adaptability and autonomy.

### **Costs/Resources Needed**

This six-month project is supported by funds from EDEN, through USDA-FADI. It requires two primary extension professionals that share responsibilities for the technical knowledge in animal emergency prevention and management and its associated delivery methods. An EDEN sub-committee will be engaged to provide editing and iterative feedback. EDEN delegates will also be recruited to pilot test the offline course and materials. Other allotments within the grant include monies for “contracted services” such as graphic design and IT work, travel, stipends for peer editors, and other associated indirect costs.

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