

ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION¹

Howard Ladewig
University of Florida

Abstract

Performance-based budgeting is defined as requiring strategic planning regarding agency mission, goals and objectives, and a process that requests quantifiable data that provides meaningful information about program outcomes (Melkers and Willoughby, 1998). During the decade of the 1990s, the Congress of the United States and 47 State Legislatures passed performance-based legislation or mandates.²

A major impetus behind the passage of this accountability legislation was that increased competition for public funding produced a deficit-induced imperative to limit government. A second impetus was a growing interest in budget reforms that could enhance the performance of government agencies and programs. The goal of such legislation was to restrain budgets while improving organizational performance management.

This accountability legislation is particularly important to CSREES and State Extension Partners because it describes the procedures and protocols by which the Secretary of Agriculture will evaluate research and extension activities. Although some of the legislation does not directly affect State Partners, the State Extension Partners must provide the evidence necessary for the evaluations.

In response to this legislation, CSREES asked that an Evaluation and Accountability System for Extension (EASE)³ be developed and demonstrated to CSREES and State Extension Partners. This paper identifies the performance measures recommended for inclusion in EASE and discusses factors that could affect the accuracy of performance measures provided to the Secretary of Agriculture for use in evaluating research and extension activities.

¹ Presented at the Annual Meeting of National Public Policy Education Conference, September 17, 2001, San Antonio.

² Arkansas, Massachusetts, and New York do not have performance-based budgeting legislation or mandates

³ For more information on EASE, please go to <http://ease.tamu.edu>

