

Definition of Interdisciplinary Work

Interdisciplinary Extension work integrates the knowledge and perspectives of multiple areas of expertise to holistically solve problems through research and education. Examples include the Community Conservation Assistance Program, Lighten Up NH, Strengthening New Hampshire Communities and Family Farm Financial Management programs. This differs from multidisciplinary efforts that fail to integrate knowledge and perspectives. Interdisciplinary work is most effective when the problem to be addressed is complex and affects multiple audiences.

Why should Extension carry out interdisciplinary work?

“Enhance interdisciplinary programming needs because:

- Issues aren't necessarily related solely to traditional program disciplines
- It helps address the need for a holistic approach to social, environmental and economic problems
- Funders, clients and other stakeholders expect it
- It provides for the wise use of public resources
- It results in better workload management and more meaningful work
 - It changes people's ways of seeing themselves and the world
- It enhances revenue generation
- It allows for more flexible and expedient response to emerging issues
- It ties multiple academic units to program initiatives”

Source: PAST Recommendations – March 2, 2004