



2008 Key Issue Identification Form

Instructions: Each county, program area and specialists as a whole are to identify key issues that their programming activities currently address, or should address. For each issue, craft a 2-3 sentence issue statement that outlines, in brief, what the issue at hand is and why it is important or relevant. The issue statements should be crafted based on objective data, as well as input from Specialists, County Educators, Advisory Councils, and input from other key stakeholders.

1. In a few words, please come up with a title that succinctly defines the issue:

Achieving Financial Security Now and in Later Life

2. Please describe the issue in 2-3 sentences (i.e. craft an issue statement that describes what the issue at hand is and why it is a significant issue):

The overall goal is for people to acquire the knowledge, skills, and motivation to build financial security. Programs focus on behavioral change, starting with achieving financial self-sufficiency, then stability. The ultimate goal, financial security, is the cornerstone of prosperous communities, nurturing neighborhoods, and strong families. The goal of most Americans is financial security--the ability to save and invest for the future while keeping pace with day-to-day basic needs.

In 2-3 sentences, please describe what the public value for Extension to address this issue is/would be. (The term public value refers to not only the value of our outreach activities to community *participants*, but, more importantly, the value of these activities to those who do not *directly* benefit from these activities. The purpose of the Public Value approach is to secure support for activities with strong public value and identify those activities that do not have strong public value. The following is an example of a public value statement that addresses the issue of loss of rural landscape to development and other growth-related pressures.)

Adequate financial assets provide that security and have vast economic and social effects on neighborhoods, families, and children. Financial assets can result in less economic strain on households, more financial resiliency, more educational attainment, less marital dissolution, less risk of poverty spanning across generations, better overall health and satisfaction, higher property values and stability in a neighborhood, improved property maintenance, and more citizen involvement in civic issues.

Building financial assets allows households to achieve goals that require a lot of money. Examples include buying a car or real estate, paying for a college education, starting up a small business, and providing a steady stream of income in retirement. Further, assets provide a cushion during unforeseen economic hardships and help people achieve a higher level of living.

Issue of buying assets – Ex. Buying a home not only increases household assets, in most cases, but it is also a key contributor to community prosperity. Where home ownership flourishes,

residents take more pride in their community, are more civic-minded, benefit from better school systems, and enjoy lower crime rates.

New Hampshire Agriculture is a viable, dynamic industry integrated within New Hampshire's communities; providing diverse products and services; stewards of nearly a half million New Hampshire acres; and a major influence on the State's character and quality of life. (NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets, and Food, 2008). The sustainability of our farms is dependent upon the economic strength of our farm families. Being better money managers and educated consumers makes our farm families more resilient and improves the likelihood our farms will survive.

3. Identify and summarize key data that help make the case that this is a key issue (key data might include demographic trend data, University priorities, issues identified in plans/policies of other agencies and organizations, stakeholder input, etc.).

Too many individuals and families are experiencing financial crisis because of inadequate savings, too much debt, and poor planning for potential major life events. On average, U.S. households carry about \$8,000 in credit card debt, up two-thirds compared to a decade ago. More than half of Americans report living paycheck to paycheck. During the past decade, the rate of personal bankruptcy in the U.S. rose by 69 percent. Audiences to target programs to are: youth, financially vulnerable populations, and consumers making financial decisions through their lifetime. Self-sufficiency--the first step in achieving financial security--is the ability for individuals to be on their own financially without depending on friends, relatives, or government programs. Next along the continuum of personal financial responsibility is stability, or making ends meet. Life is often a constant paycheck-to-paycheck treadmill where short-term needs are met. However, one shift in the status quo (for example, loss of a job, death of a breadwinner, divorce, or long-term illness) can result in desperate measures, such as personal bankruptcy.

Several behaviors stand in the way of significant asset accumulation. Credit card debt is on the rise. In the U.S., the rate of personal savings as a percentage of disposable personal income, is among the lowest of any industrialized nation. Another concern is the estimated 10 million U.S. households that do not have a deposit account or any relationship with the formal financial services sector. These households often are female, single parent, African American or Hispanic, less educated, characterized by low levels of net worth and home ownership, and with impaired credit histories.

Family spending plans are often an area of low priority for many farm families. As a result, family living expenses may occur that exceed the available income resulting in a conflict with the overall financial goals of the farm and of the family. Increasing costs and decreasing revenues, limited or no planning for farm continuation and limited resources to weather financial storms, all threaten the survival of many New Hampshire farms. Current risks to sustainable agriculture in New Hampshire are likely to be felt by all due to the interdependency of farm, family, business and community. The option to sell farm land to development looms large as the only alternative for farm families.

4. How does/would addressing this issue tie into UNH Cooperative Extension's Mission?

Directly ties to – “Making informed decisions that strengthen youth, families and communities, sustain natural resources and improve the economy.” In New Hampshire, a Farm Viability Task Force was convened to address the need to promote the strength and

vitality of the state's agricultural sector, in recognition of its role in the state's food system, economy, and environment.

5. What Extension programs/activities, if any, currently address this issue? For each, please succinctly describe how the program/activity addresses the issue.

Making Money Work For You/Taking Charge of Your Finances – provides knowledge and skills in communication, goal setting, credit/debt management, risk management and developing a spending and savings plan that will build financial security.

Credit Check Up – provides knowledge and skills in acquiring your credit report, understanding how a negative credit report affects your purchasing power and how to repair your credit report in order to reduce expenses and increase savings to build assets needed to achieve financial security.

Don't Get Crushed By Debt – provides knowledge and skills in debt management and the development of a debt repayment calendar to decrease liabilities so that assets can be purchased to achieve financial security.

Earned Income Tax Credit – provides knowledge about tax credits and how to receive them in order to benefit those at 200% of poverty or less so that this population can rise above the poverty line and have money to pay bills and build assets to achieve financial security which in turn stimulates the local economy.

Legal Issues: Are You Prepared? and its companion seminar, Advance Care Directives: Who Will Decide?, are *Legally Secure Your Financial Future* programs about organizing important papers and evaluating one's legal affairs related to end-of-life issues – both are public awareness education offered as part of the national Cooperative Extension initiative - Financial Security in Later Life.

Take the Road to Financial Security in Later Life - increases knowledge of issues regarding later life financial security. Helps consumers assess their preparedness for later life financial security and create a plan of action to meet their personal needs and goals.

Let's Talk Before It's Too Late for the Farm – provides knowledge and skills for farm families about the need for estate planning and succession.

Avoiding the Risk of Being Crushed by Farm and Family Debt –to motivate farm families to communicate within the family about family goals, budgeting, the impact of credit decisions, evaluate debt load and prepare a debt repayment schedule through web-based education.

High School Financial Planning Program – provides knowledge and skills to youth to increase their money management skills in relation to needs and wants, putting together a spending and savings plan and to build confidence in decision making regarding money.

America Saves/New Hampshire Saves – social marketing campaign to increase the awareness of the need to save.

Starting Over – provides knowledge and skills to bankrupt debtors in credit management, spending plans to include savings and goal setting focusing on financial needs.

Getting A Grip On Your Money – a learn-at-home program that focuses on goal setting, credit/debt management, risk management and developing a spending/savings plan.

Interactions of Individual, Family, Community, and Policy Contexts on the Mental and Physical Health of Diverse Rural Low-Income Families. NC1171 – researchers from multiple states are learning about rural poor women in relation to their health and economic well-being.

6. What other organizations/agencies are currently addressing this issue?

No one is addressing the totality of financial security with the objective, unbiased, research-based aspect of UNH Cooperative Extension's programs and the ability to provide these services at low or no cost which would otherwise be an obstacle to obtaining this knowledge and skills.. Some organizations/agencies are addressing an aspect of financial security but the totality of financial security.

Bonnie Clac and Individual Development Account partner agencies provide money management to their participants with the ultimate goal of either buying a house, starting a business, buying a car or engaging in higher education.

Consumer Credit Counseling Service provides home buying seminars.

7. If Extension does not currently address this issue, how might we address this issue in the future? (Consider staff capacity, financial resources, volunteer capacity, and potential partnerships with other agencies/organizations, etc.).

The emphasis of extension programs is on behavioral change--developing a financial plan, managing risks of loss, reducing household debt, and saving and investing to meet life goals. Though we are currently addressing portions of this issue, it's critical to address more aspects of this issue and with more intensity.

Please Complete and Email to Lisa Townson by October 23, 2008

Form Submitted by: Suzann Enzian Knight

Date: October 20, 2008

Representing: Family Consumer Resources Department, Family Resource Management