

Potential Barriers to Participation

On September 23, 1969, U. S. Secretary of Agriculture Clifford M. Hardin issued Secretary's Memorandum No. 1662. This directive requested that attention be given to "economic barriers and social inhibitors which tend to limit or prevent effective participation of the disadvantaged, alienated, minority, racial, and ethnic clientele in programs of the Cooperative Extension Service."

Following is a listing of some economic or social barriers which may limit participation in extension programs of the disadvantaged, alienated, racial minority, and ethnic clientele. This listing is not all inclusive, thus, there may be other conditions and/or barriers which may impact clientele participation.

Barriers that limit or deny participation and equal access to extension programs due to one's economic and/or social status, even though unintentional, will have the same impact on self-esteem and quality of life as does intentional discrimination.

ECONOMIC BARRIERS are economic conditions that limit or exclude participation of nontraditional clientele. For instance:

- Programs, activities, consultative services, and events that involve high capital or credit inputs.
- Programs, meetings, tours, activities, and events conducted for individuals and groups based upon high levels of income and affluence.
- Program activities (demonstrations, adaptive research, etc.) which require costly purchases of equipment or supplies.
- 4-H Club projects, camps, and recreational activities with extensive financial requirements for membership and participation, including dress and travel.
- Programs in home economics which require reciprocal entertaining, expensive materials, registration and consultation fees and meals.
- Programs in agriculture which involve in-depth school with fees, entertainment, meals, and travel.
- Meeting continuous demands of commercial cooperators for the traditional time and service of Extension staff.

SOCIAL INHIBITORS are conditions of a social nature which limit or exclude participation of nontraditional clientele. For instance:

- Customs, traditions, expectations, folkways and mores based on race, religion, social status and family background or heritage.
- Levels of living and life styles below others in the area of target group.
- Level of education and self-esteem below that of other persons in clientele group.
- Degree of alienation and extent of belonging to the dominant clientele group as viewed by the disadvantaged and minority groups.
- Physical and mental handicaps and disabilities, including language and communication skills.

- Extent of courtesy, tact, and recognition of human dignity accorded the disadvantaged and minority groups by extension staff.
- Learning situations where subject matter content is too complex and is not relevant to needs and problems of clientele audience.
- Program activities conducted in a location where minority groups were previously rejected and in which "threats" and unpleasant experiences occurred.
- Symbols and membership in "militant" or "anti-establishment organizations."