



Lesson D

Program Outreach

Description: In this lesson, you will be encouraged to learn as much as you can about the community that your program or activity serves. To ensure that USDA programs, services and activities are reaching all who should receive them, learn all you can about the people who make up the community--their social and cultural customs, values, languages, needs and environment.

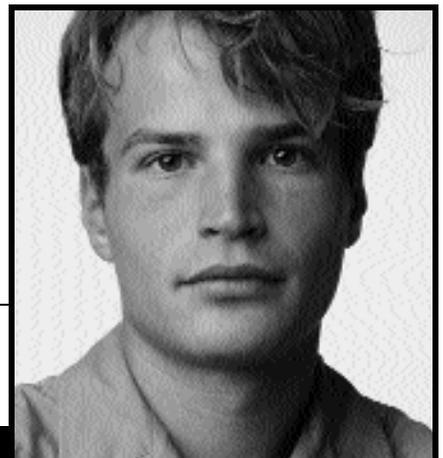
Learn which related programs and services are available. Many USDA customers can be described as limited in resources, socially disadvantaged or as living in under-served communities in both rural and urban areas. (Be aware that most people do not like to be so categorized.)

Objective: Upon completion of this lesson, you will:

- Learn some strategies to help you achieve sound knowledge of the area you serve.

Listed below are the **topics** associated with this lesson.

- Topic 1 Establishing a Community Center
- Topic 2 Establishing Visibility in the Community
- Topic 3 Communicating Effectively with Customers





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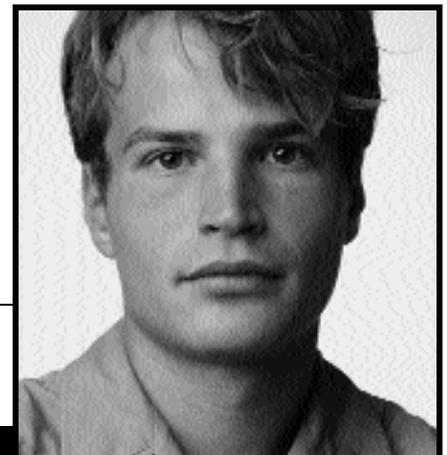
Program Outreach

Topic 1 - Establishing a Community Contact

The best way to understand your target area is to **introduce yourself to the community leaders**. Establish rapport by telling them about yourself and the USDA's programs. Ask them about the needs, resources, goals, functions and activities of the community.

Once you establish a relationship with individuals of diverse heritages and backgrounds in the community, you can solve many communications problems simply by **asking for information and assistance**.

These contacts can help you **understand the challenges and the barriers** faced by under-serviced communities. Identifying a local contact and establishing a relationship of mutual respect and dialogue is one of the most effective ways to improve USDA service to under-served communities and groups





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Topic 1 - Establishing a Community Contact

Example

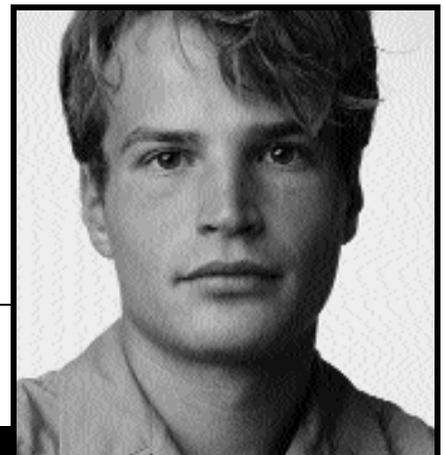
Field Site Visits

It is the responsibility of every USDA agency to ensure effective communication with communities and individuals who can benefit from USDA programs, activities or services. Every agency should assign supervisory responsibilities to a staff member to provide instruction and guidelines for enhancing relationships with the communities we serve. Every member of the agency staff should be compelled to receive and follow these guidelines.

Jim: “And remember we need to get the information so we can document the agricultural needs of the community... always be polite and courteous and give them your name and number so they can get back to you.”

Jim is instructing several staff members on how to conduct field site visits to all the counties in the state. He is the coordinator of outreach for a USDA agency.

Establishing a relationship of mutual respect and dialogue is one of the most effective ways to improve USDA service to under-served communities and groups.





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Topic 1 - Establishing a Community Contact

Exercise

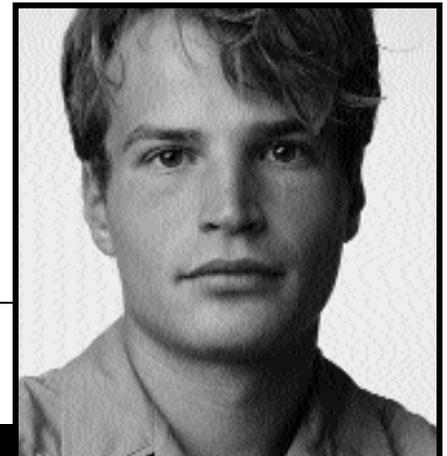
Outreach Efforts

Following is an example of a recent and effective USDA outreach effort.

Outreach coordinator Sonia Brown and another coordinator, Tom Harmon, visited a state where recent weather conditions had displaced hundreds of people, destroyed hundreds of homes and resulted in the loss of crops and livestock. Through the concerted efforts of USDA agencies, the state Outreach and Food and Agricultural Committees, state agency officials and local community development organizations, meetings were held to inform people about how to apply for food stamps, housing assistance and farm-related services.

What are some of the ways USDA can ensure that these services are provided in a nondiscriminatory manner? (Select all that apply.)

- a. Get the word out by every source possible throughout the stricken community, about meetings to be held to inform people about USDA services, including media, churches and community organizations.
- b. Make sure that the meetings are accessible to all persons, ensuring maximum attendance.
- c. Provide sign language interpreters and other language interpreters, if necessary.
- d. Ask local religious leaders to tell their congregations how to apply for USDA disaster benefits.





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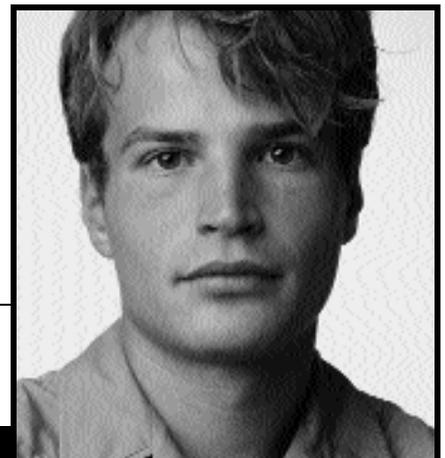
Program Outreach

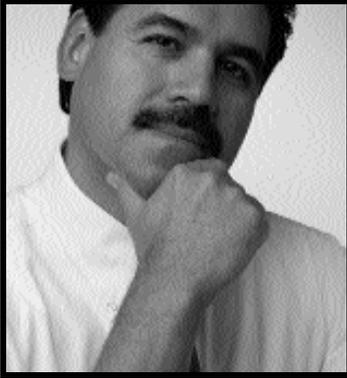
Topic 1 - Establishing a Community Contact

Exercise Answer

The correct answers are A, B, C and D.

All of these activities are ways in which USDA can ensure that these services are provided in a nondiscriminatory manner.





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Topic 2 - Establishing Visibility in the Community

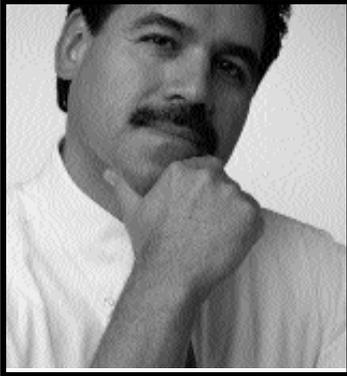
Ask your contacts to accompany you on site visits and demonstrations in the community. Having your contact person with you will increase your credibility among other members of the community.

Field visits provide opportunities to **create good relationships**. Make sure that your hosts know that you want to help them establish projects that will benefit everyone involved.

It is very important to have a visible presence throughout the community so that you can **make potential customers aware of USDA programs and services**. Your community contact persons can assist you in arranging for local visits to field sites affected by USDA programs and arrange for additional presentations at schools, community college classes, churches and other community and group meetings.

Through your field site visits and presentations, emphasize that programs are **open to receive applications** and that technical assistance is always available. Explain information in plain English (and other local languages) and have a supply of handouts on any eligibility requirements that must be met for the program, service or activity.





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Topic 2 - Establishing Visibility in the Community

Example

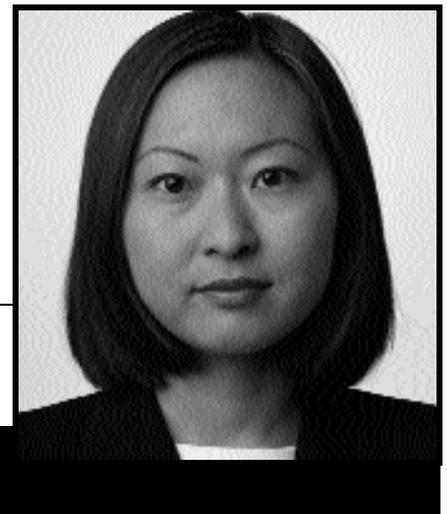
Making a Difference

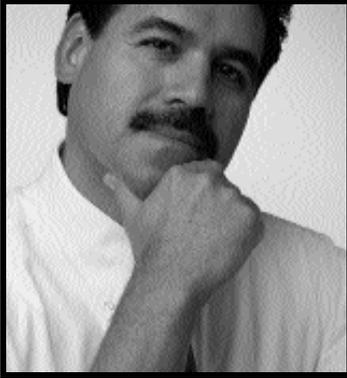
Marcus is a new minority graduate of Tuskegee University and has decided on a career with the USDA. He was hired by the Natural Resources Conservation Service to work in Blaine County on a special project addressing the county's severe problems with soil erosion.

Upon arrival at the county office, the "old timers" on the staff agreed to take Marcus around the county to introduce him to farmers and county officials so that he could hear their concerns and problems first hand. After about a month of learning about his new job, Marcus was ready to begin establishing relationships on his own in the community. He began by calling upon the farmers and other country members he had been introduced to by his co-workers, and set up meetings for all farmers throughout the county in local high schools to provide technical assistance based upon his area of specialization--soil erosion.

Marcus had to come up with a plan for increasing his visibility in Blaine County. The following are four of the best ways he identified to achieve visibility in the field:

- Provide information in writing on USDA programs, services and technical assistance.
- Meet with community leaders to talk about USDA programs, services and technical assistance.
- Establish community contacts and ask them to introduce him to others in the community who they believe could benefit from USDA programs, services and technical assistance.
- Go to the library and do research on the agricultural history of the community.





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Topic 2 - Establishing Visibility in the Community

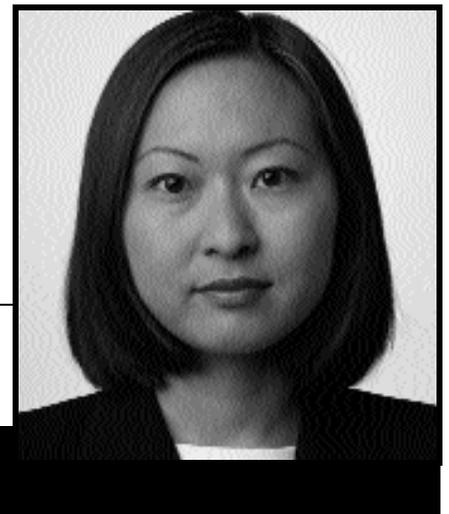
Exercise

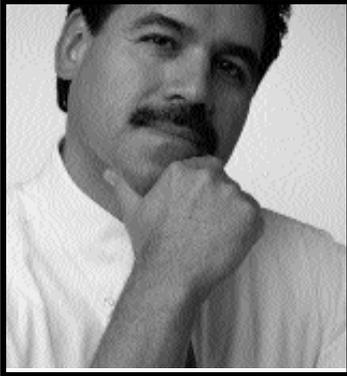
Outreach Strategy

Over the past 20 years, several Asian farmers have settled and established a thriving community farming Asian fruits and vegetables. Many of these recent settlers are from Laos and no one in the county office speaks their unique dialect. How can you make sure that this group of farmers is aware and takes full advantage of USDA programs, services and technical assistance?

If you had to draw up a plan to make sure the Laotian farmers were fully informed, what would be your strategy? Place these options in order of how they would be done.

- ___ a. Write a strategy plan.
- ___ b. Talk to community leaders to get input.
- ___ c. Talk to your supervisor to get input.
- ___ d. Identify an interpreter then arrange for a visit with as many Laotian farmers as possible to provide a presentation outlining USDA programs, services and technical assistance.
- ___ e. Pass out your business cards (after having bilingual cards printed).





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Topic 2 - Establishing Visibility in the Community

Exercise Answer

The correct answer is C, B, A, D and E.





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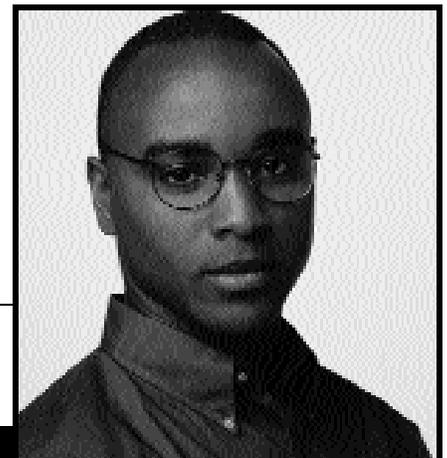
Topic 3 - Communicating Effectively With Customers

When speaking with your customers about programs and activities **keep your language plain, simple and concise.** Avoid using slang, agency jargon or acronyms.

Translate all written information into clear language, similar to the level at which most newspapers are written. Avoid technical terms wherever possible, and when you do use technical language, be sure to provide a straight-forward definition and/or explanation.

Always be ready to listen. Encourage people to identify their needs in their own language and terms and always try to have an interpreter or a translator available. Other useful techniques to use when there are language difficulties **include visual presentations, drawings, charts and graphs,** pictures or some type of hands-on activities. The more interactive and engaging you become as a listener, the better service you will give.

Be patient. It takes time to build trust. Different cultures have different learning styles, different mind sets and different social values.





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Topic 3 - Communicating Effectively With Customers

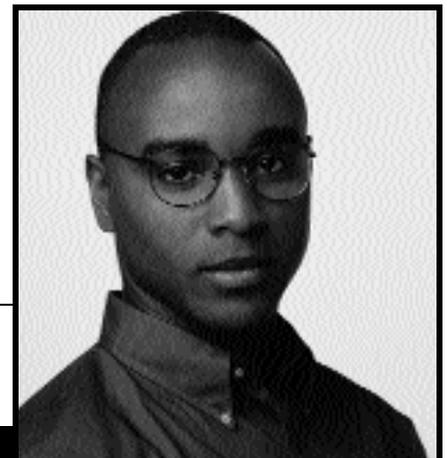
Example

Effective Communication

Doris has just found out that she has a meeting with a group of male and female African-American farmers next week at the community center. What could Doris do to help prepare herself for the meeting?

There are three techniques that Doris can use to ensure that she succeeds in sharing information about USDA with the farmers:

1. Make a presentation using colorful slides or a videotape that presents the information about the program.
2. Involve the audience in her presentation by asking about their needs and concerns before she begins. She should then adapt her presentation accordingly.
3. Research the groups needs before the meeting and prepare a tailored presentation and handouts.





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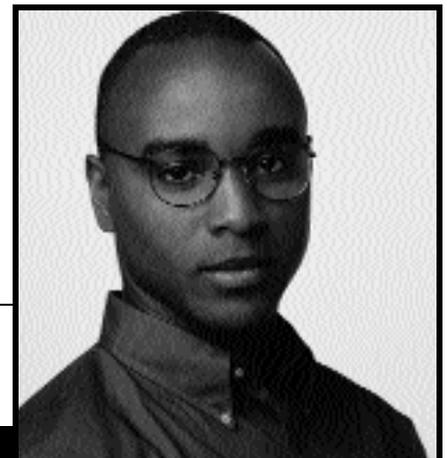
Topic 3 - Communicating Effectively With Customers

Exercise

Making Customers Aware of Services

Which of the following are ways to ensure that all your potential customers are aware of USDA services? (Select all that apply.)

- a. Establish community contacts.
- b. Plan and make regular field visits.
- c. Keep your language plain and simple.
- d. Always be ready to listen.





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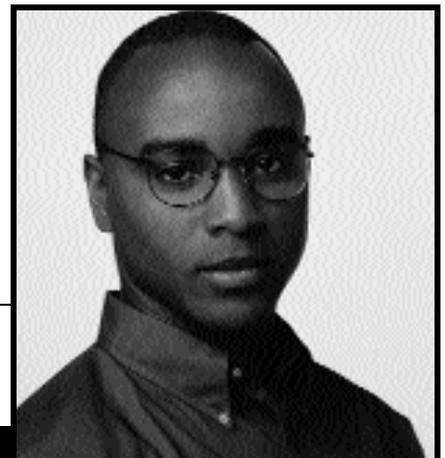
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Topic 3 - Communicating Effectively With Customers

Exercise Answer

The correct answers are A, B, C and D.

All of these choices are ways of ensuring that your potential customers are aware of USDA services.





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Lesson Summary

1. What is the BEST way to solve many of the communications problems involved in reaching out to a community?

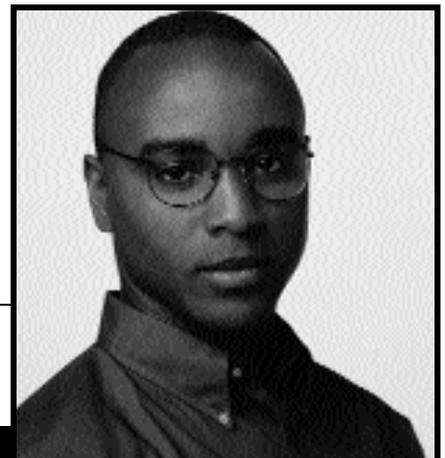
- A. Ask for information and assistance from the community
- B. Bring in an expert on communications
- C. Bring in an interpreter
- D. Learn the local language

2. True or False? You can use your community contact persons to assist you in arranging for visits to field sites affected by USDA programs and arrange for additional presentations at schools, community college classes, churches and other community and group meetings.

- A. True
- B. False

3. True or False? To communicate effectively with the community, use slang, agency jargon and acronyms.

- A. True
- B. False





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Lesson Summary Answers

1. What is the BEST way to solve many of the communications problems involved in reaching out to a community?

The correct answer is A. Once you establish a relationship with individuals from the community, you can solve many communications problems simply by asking for information and assistance. These contacts can help you understand the challenges and the barriers faced by groups that have traditionally been under-served.

2. True or False? You can use your community contact persons to assist you in arranging for visits to field sites affected by USDA programs and arrange for additional presentations at schools, community college classes, churches and other community and group meetings.

The correct answer is True. Your community contacts will help you get in touch will all the different groups and organizations of a community.

3. True or False? To communicate effectively with the community, use slang, agency jargon and acronyms.

The correct answer is False. When speaking with your customers about programs and activities, keep your language plain, simple and concise. Avoid using slang, agency jargon and acronyms.

