

Delaware County

Understanding the Motivations of OSU Extension Program Participants: Meeting Their Specific Needs for Learning and Engagement

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Introduction

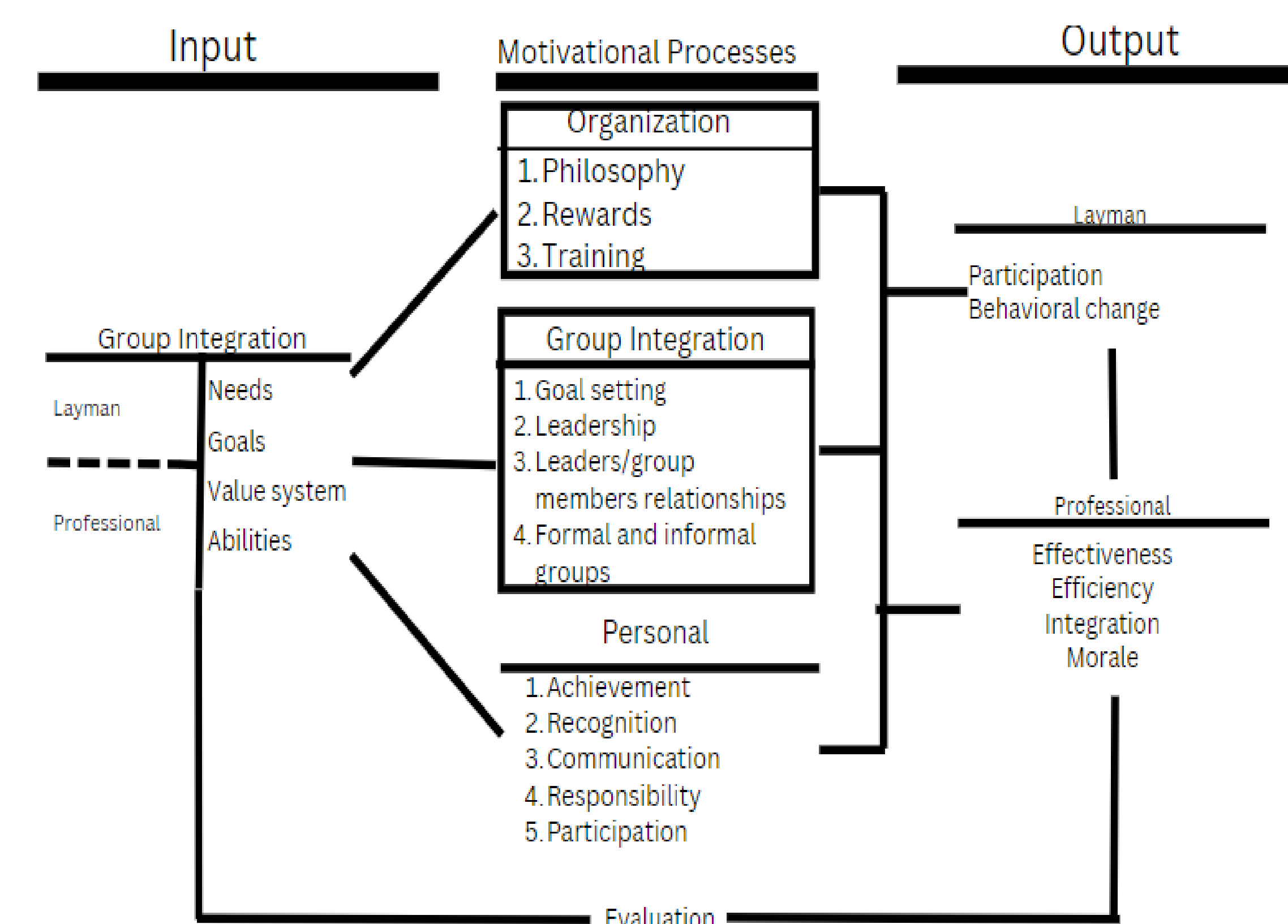
In the United States, the Cooperative Extension System was established by laws aimed at increasing educational opportunities, particularly in home economics, mechanics, and agriculture.

Landmark acts include:

- Morrill Act of 1862: Established Land-Grant institutions in every state to advance mechanical and agricultural education.
- Morrill Act of 1890: Extended agricultural education to African Americans through additional land-grant institutions.
- Smith-Lever Act of 1914: Formed the Cooperative Extension Service, with the goal of expanding educational outreach to both rural and urban people and offering practical, science-based information.

Today, Cooperative Extension carries out this role today by providing the public with research-based insights from land-grant colleges, adjusting as needed to meet evolving educational demands such as the digital gap between urban and rural areas and technology improvements (Davis, 2014). Extension staff may provide effective educational experiences and improve client engagement by understanding the diverse motivations of program participants. This keeps the system's outreach consistent and responsive.

Figure 1. A motivation model for Extension
Source: (Lewis, 1972)



Key Audiences

Master Gardener Volunteers (MGVs): Typically participate for personal growth, community involvement, and practical horticultural knowledge. MGVs make a substantial contribution through their volunteer hours and are driven by a passion to learn throughout their lives.

Pesticide & Fertilizer Recertification Participants: Attend primarily to meet regulatory requirements. They seek direct, compliance-oriented knowledge to fulfil legal obligations, which reflects a goal-oriented learning approach.

Figure 2. Delaware County Pesticide Recertification-December, 2022



Program Implications

Flexible Delivery Methods: Offering varied learning formats (e.g., hands-on workshops, online modules) accommodates the distinct needs and logistical preferences of each group.

Audience-Specific Content: Tailoring information to meet regulatory needs for Recertification Participants and community engagement goals for MGVs supports higher retention and practical application.

Ongoing Support and Feedback: Needs assessments and continuous support enhance program relevance and adapt to shifting community needs

Learning Objectives

1. Understand motivations driving adult engagement in non-formal educational settings.
2. Differentiate between the motivational profiles of MGVs and Recertification Participants.
3. Recognize diverse recruitment strategies that align with adult learning motivations.
4. Design programming that addresses these unique needs to optimize Extension outreach.

Motivational Frameworks

Program impact is increased when adult learners' particular motivations are taken into consideration. Two key frameworks guide Extension's approach to adult learning:

•Houle's Typology (1961):

Goal-oriented, activity-oriented, and learning-oriented are the three categories into which Houle's Typology (1961) divides adult learners. Different elements of educational programs are valued by each type:

- *Goal-oriented learners seek specific outcomes, often aligning with Recertification Participants who prioritize compliance.*
- *Activity-oriented learners participate for social engagement, seen in MGVs who connect with peers and share knowledge.*
- *Learning-oriented learners value personal growth and knowledge, aligning well with MGVs' commitment to continuous learning.*

•Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations

Research indicates that adult learners in informal settings aim to achieve both extrinsic objectives like skill development and job progression as well as intrinsic objectives like stress reduction, social connections, and self-confidence (Karalis & Koskeris, 2016). Extension is able to create programs that meet both practical demands and personal fulfillment by acknowledging these conflicting motives.

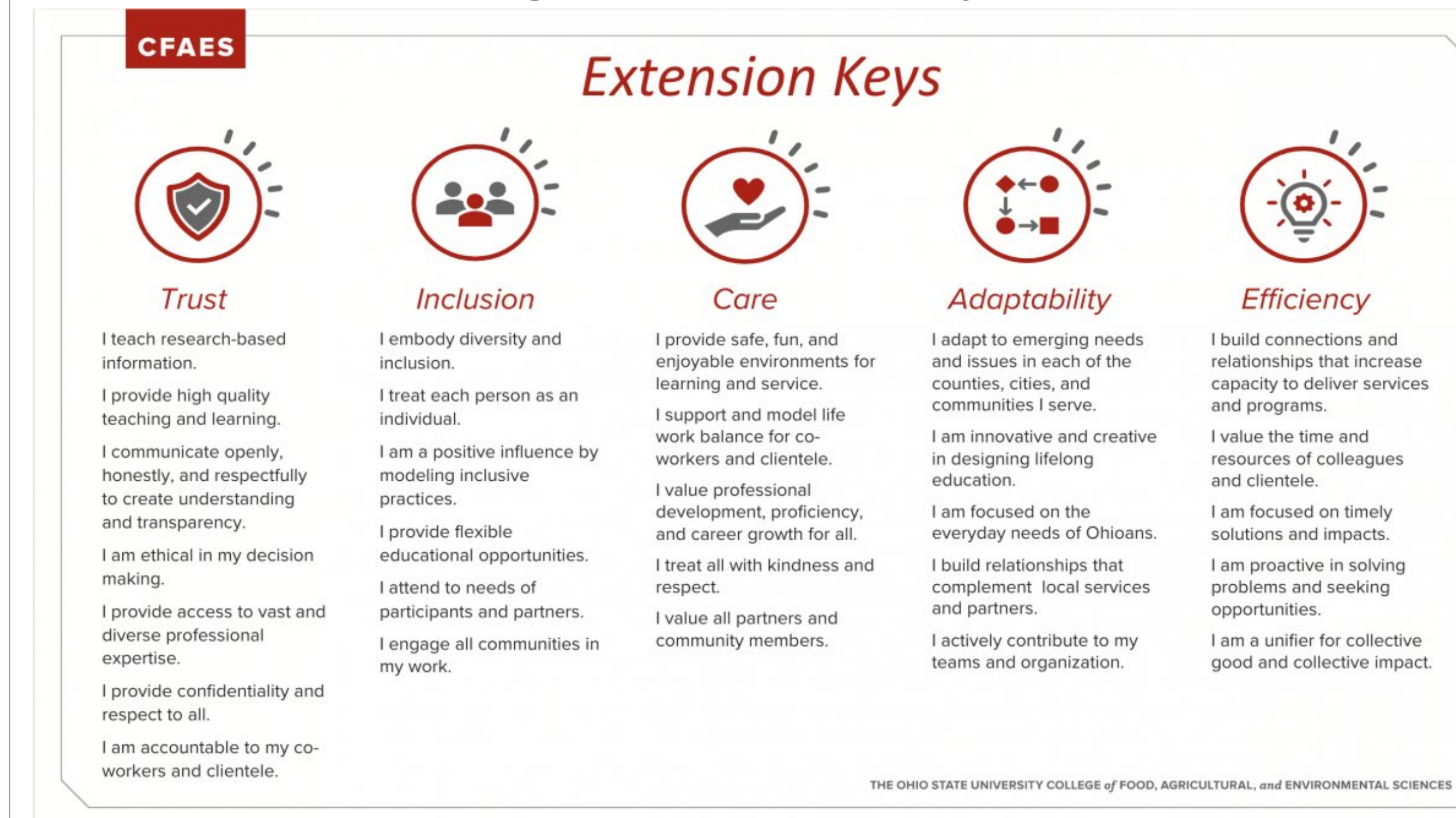
Figure 3. Mahoning County MGV Facilitating a Garden Art Series



We are the Keys to Extension

- Trust: Using research-based insights allows Extension professionals to tailor programs effectively, meeting participants' specific needs and fostering trust within diverse communities.
- Inclusion: Recognizing the varied motivational drivers across participant demographics supports an inclusive approach to program design, ensuring that programs accommodate different learning styles and community needs.
- Adaptability: Incorporating flexible, participant-focused program models enables Extension to respond to changing participant motivations, allowing both volunteer-driven and compliance-focused programs to thrive.

Figure 4. Extension Keys



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