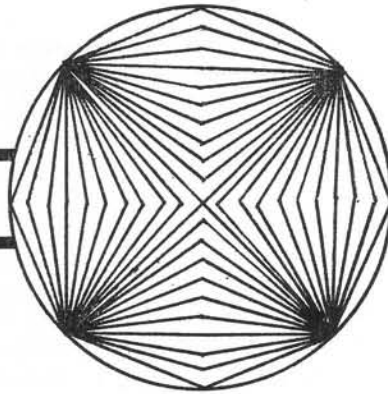


## Points of View



### What HUD's Doing To Improve Its Consumer Services\*

The problem facing all administrations is how does the federal government deliver its goods and services to the ultimate public consumer—the eligible citizen?

In responding to this problem, the federal government can elect one of four delivery systems: (1) retail directly to the consumer as does Social Security, (2) employ private contractors as does the Defense Department in its procurement of weaponry and supplies, (3) deal through local governments and local institutions as does the U.S. Office of Education, or (4) concurrently employ all three distribution systems as does the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The HUD case is obviously the most complex, and our struggle continues to streamline this multiple delivery system to give the public a better product within a more reasonable time span.

#### A Case of Good Conflict

To say that HUD is embroiled in conflict is to understate the obvious.

Yet, what isn't always observed is that the "conflict" and "controversy" is built into the business and, for all practical purposes, is unavoidable.

For example, one of HUD's congressional mandates is to provide "a decent, safe, and sanitary home, in a suitable living environment" for all American citizens.

In response to this mandate, HUD might be inclined to deal with a large, efficient developer of quality living units. However, HUD may be prohibited from dealing with this developer in the absence of an "affirmative action" program to employ minorities.

Through its community development programs, HUD might want to improve the "living environment" in a given community for a known and obvious slum. Yet, there can be no project without the consent of the "city fathers." There's also no project without local state "enabling" legislation. On the one hand, HUD must act aggressively against slums and blight, while on the other hand, HUD must respect the prerogatives of local governments.

Although definite public relations problems exist that cannot be dis-

\* This discussion represents the views of the author only and isn't necessarily the view of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

counted, an argument can be made (in light of the above) that the greater the conflict, the more HUD is doing to carry out its mandates from Congress.

## A Few Solutions

Through the maze of corporations, cumbersome state governments, city bureaucracies, and special purpose districts, HUD is trying to improve the delivery of its programs. The following are a few examples:

### 1. *Decentralization:*

HUD has undergone a massive reorganization and has established some 39 field (area) offices with full authority for most program and project approval. This is a far cry from the centralized bureaucracy it once was where field offices were only paper processing units.

This means that program service can now be delivered in the communities, on the spot, with considerably less processing time.

### 2. *Model Cities:*

The Model Cities Program was started in the late 60s as a cutting-edge strategy against hard-core slums with chronic social problems.

It has produced some organizational by-products that shouldn't go unnoticed. First, it permits an "open-end" use of monies which means that local programs can be designed to fit local needs without time-consuming legislative or policy changes. Second, along with other HUD planning-type programs, it permits a local unit of gov-

ernment to build up its staff and organizational capacity to better manage its own affairs.

### 3. *Application Procedures:*

There's probably no bigger obstacle to the program delivery than governmental application requirements. Simplification in this instance means that applicants—both public and private—save in terms of the investment of time and seed money.

### 4. *Complaint Handling:*

In an age of increased consumer awareness, product complaints from the citizenry must be dealt with. This is even more true in a public setting where product complaints—particularly about housing—are laid at the doorstep of government. In response to this phenomenon, HUD area offices have been busy setting up "consumer desks" for counseling and complaint handling.

### 5. *Building Up Local Governments:*

With its planning (701 monies), HUD has infused new life into state and local planning bodies while at the same time encouraging governors and mayors to become actively involved in program management and the allocation of resources.

### 6. *Citizen Participation:*

Probably the ultimate in governmental effort to reshape its product and service is the requirement of local *citizen participation*. The important thing here is that the ultimate user gets an opportunity to influence the establishment of priorities and the allocation of local program resources.

## Finale

No ultimate solution to the question of outreach and program delivery in an urban governmental setting exists. As we begin to cope with one problem (for example, the need for urban renewal), we only uncover another (the critical need for low-rent housing). By the same token, as we began to build low-rent housing in quantity, we discovered the need to lower the density and scatter the sites.

Each new episode changes the relationship within the delivery system and forces on us a whole new way of doing business. This, in my opinion, is what makes HUD one of the more exciting institutions of public service.

ELMER C. BINFORD

*Assistant Regional Administrator  
for Community Development  
Department of Housing  
and Urban Development  
Chicago, Illinois*

## U.S. Policy Education As Seen from Down Under

After a few months in Australia, it gradually dawned on me how privileged I'd been to have had a career in public policy education in the United States. Nowhere else in the world would it have been possible.

This realization was focused for me after I finished a seminar for the New South Wales branch of the Australian Agricultural Economics Association. My topic was "Problem-Oriented Research and Education—An Iowa Example." One of my colleagues remarked thoughtfully and sadly after I had finished, "I don't see how that could ever happen here."

Suddenly it struck me that it couldn't really have happened anywhere except in the United States. The Extension Service operating out of a university is one good reason. And, I doubt many places exist in the world where people feel as responsible to be well informed for making decisions as participating members of representative government. It has been a rewarding career.

## Inception

We've come a long way since that first national policy conference in the Del Prado hotel in Chicago. At Iowa State, Carl Malone and I began with a series on fiscal and monetary policy to avoid a post-war depression. We knew from the reception we received that we'd started on something significant and exciting. Parallel programs started in Purdue, Michigan, and North Carolina, among others, at about the same time.

There was an adequate backlog of untaught research on farm price policy and later on agricultural adjustment policy to make a significant impact on citizen understanding for decision making. The pattern was to comb through the research literature on a relevant problem, identify the problem, describe the alternative policy proposals, and appraise the consequences of the alternatives for key influentials. Some of us developed a core of about 1,000 such leaders to teach.

This kind of adult education conducted by Cooperative Extension was unique in the world. In the Western world, typified by Australia, social science research is reported in the journals and the assumption is it will be picked up by the press and politi-

cal debate to enlighten decision making. In the communist world and in the growing numbers of nations under military dictatorships, such research is done specifically for state planning and execution.

In the United States, the research and education on agricultural adjustment had a profound impact on the adjustment as we have gone from 30 million people on farms in 1940 to 9.8 million in 1970.

### Looking Ahead

The issues are becoming more complex and the inventory of relevant research isn't keeping pace with the complexity of the emerging problems. The audience, now composed of urban industrial and labor leaders and government officials as well as farmers, is more sophisticated. They're conditioned to specific information for production purposes programmed by computer. They can be impatient with less specific information for public decision making.

The university research and adult education system in the United States has the resources to conduct problem-oriented research and education. But it hasn't organized itself to develop the capability to actually conduct such programs on a continuing basis.

The old system of 1 or 2 state specialists teaching 2,000 people in a year, recruited by county staff for county or area meetings, is obsolete and has a limited future. Even in its heyday relatively few states participated. A specialist can conduct his own specific research and then conduct intensive education, but this spreads his resources very thin.

A few of us have conducted pilot operations of problem-oriented re-

search and education. With administrative support—and some slight coercion—an ad hoc team for planning and execution has been put together for a single massive program. This isn't a continuing capability.

The elements of such a pilot operation were:

1. A planning task force including teachers, research, educational organization, and material preparation staff.
2. An interdisciplinary research team recruited for specific research needs.
3. An operations team for scheduling and managing the execution of the educational program.
4. A teaching team to organize specific subject matter and reference material and prepare a teaching outline.
5. A materials preparation team from information service.
6. Program execution by a variety of methods including use of mass media for an umbrella of support or as a tool for teaching—direct teaching in workshops or teaching by a combination of reading and discussion.
7. Follow-up research and education (with some education follow-up conducted by trained county staff).

Enough of these pilot programs have been conducted in a number of states to assure that the programs are possible. The university has demonstrated that it can conduct research relevant to urgent public issues; that it can effectively communicate the research to decision makers and that people welcome such a program of research and education as a legitimate function of the university. Problem-

oriented research and education on a continuing basis is possible, but no university has as yet approached a continuing capability.

A tentative list of requirements for such a continuing capability includes:

1. *Administrative commitment.* This is absolutely essential.
2. *A small, permanent core staff.* The core group will include one or more full-time research leaders, an information service person, and sufficient teacher leaders for continuous programming.
3. *Short-term help* on research or teaching from university staff interested enough to participate in a particular program. Enough flexibility exists in most universities that half-year postponements of longer-term commitments are possible to provide for such volunteer participation.

Meeting these requirements is well within the resource capability of most land-grant universities considering the proliferation of area staff often starving for a research base for their teaching. Universities just haven't or-

ganized themselves for such a continuing capability.

Other forms of alternative organization are probably possible but they must provide for comprehensive planning, a specific research base, adequate audience recruitment related to the teaching technology, and effective teaching.

Our future's uncertain, but the possibilities are known and exciting. If a university decides to organize itself to meet the urgent demand for problem-oriented research and education (to provide specific and relevant answers for decision makers), the methodology is available and adequate.

But, we didn't get to the moon by individual, Edison-type research and journal articles. Neither will we solve public finance, environmental, or rural and urban development problems by conducting educational programs on what's published as research results in refereed journals of the social sciences.

It's a new day. The past has provided a very satisfying career. The new day can, too.

WALLACE E. OGG  
*Ames, Iowa*