The Collaboration Advantage: Enhancing Supports for Older Adults in Rural Communities

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Learning Objectives

- Describe the shared goals and complementary strengths of AAAs/OAA providers/senior centers and UF/IFAS Extension.
- Analyze opportunities for partnership by mapping overlapping community needs and organizational priorities.
- Apply a practical framework for initiating and developing partnerships with local UF/IFAS Extension offices.

Grassroots Approach to Change

- **Bottom-up process**: Change begins locally, often in small, organic ways, before spreading to wider levels.

- **Community involvement**: Involves all stakeholders in planning and implementation (i.e., local elected officials, community trustees, those likely to be most impacted by change, and local civic, religious, businesses).

- **Local knowledge:** Uses the insights and experiences of community members to guide solutions.

- **Collective action:** Relies on the combined efforts of many individuals rather than top-down directives

What Is Cooperative Extension?

- UF/IFAS Extension brings university research, knowledge, and resources directly into local communities.
- We operate through a partnership among county government, the University of Florida, and USDA.
- Our trusted local presence allows us to understand and respond to the unique needs of the communities we serve.
- We serve as educators, connectors, conveners, and community partners.
- We provide research-based education, technical expertise, and connections to trusted resources.

Jefferson County Extension Office

FAMU FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES

FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES
Creating Healthy & Sustainable Families

Jefferson County, Florida
the keystone county
established 1827

UF IFAS
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

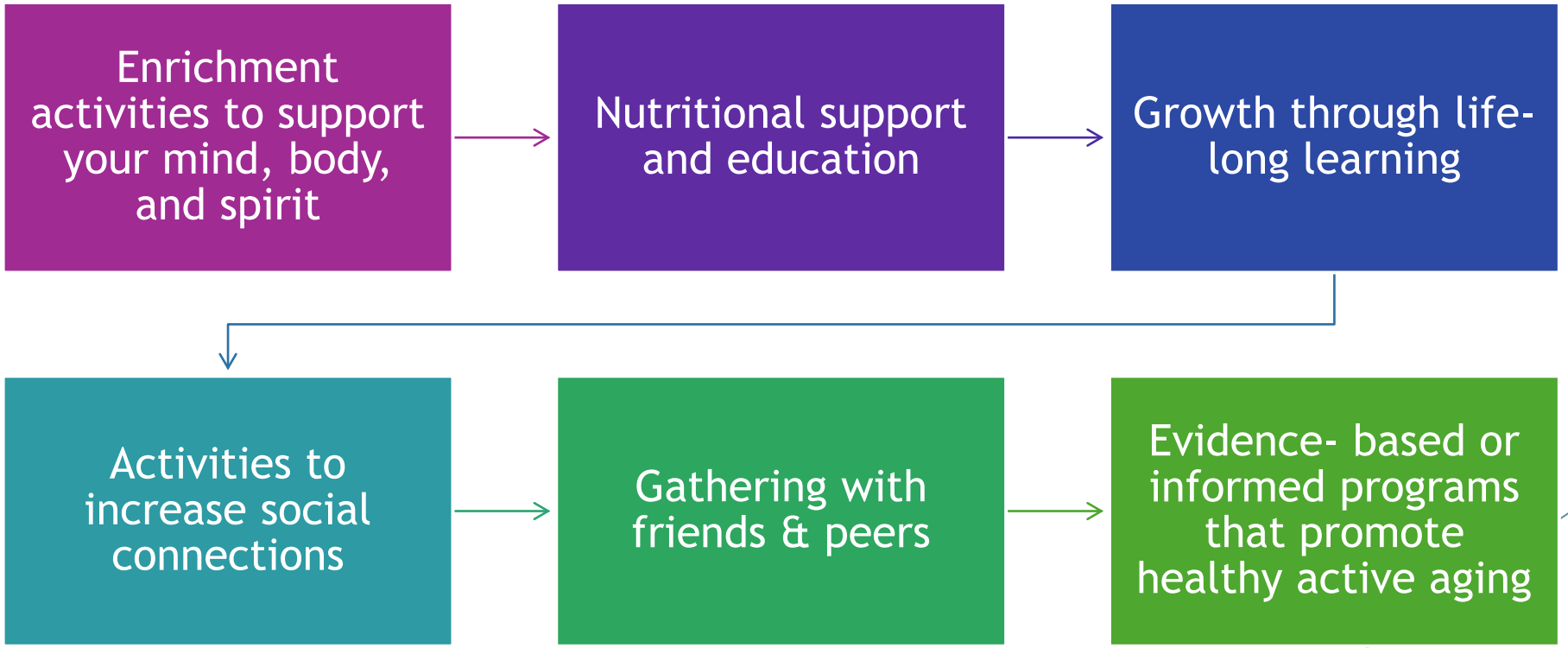
4-H

Where Do County Extension Offices and Senior Services Connect?

- Nutrition and Healthy Living
- Food Safety
- Chronic Disease Self Management
- Active Living
- Education
- Family Resources

Introducing ENGAGE! Center for Active Aging

Advantage Aging Solutions is proud to announce the launch of ENGAGE! Center for Active Aging, a new center dedicated to enriching the lives of older adults through connection, learning, wellness, and community involvement. Hosted at the UF/IFAS Jefferson County Extension Office, the ENGAGE! Center will serve as a center that will offer



Intergenerational Programming Opportunities

Rooted Together

How to Initiate a Partnership with Your Local Extension Office

1. Start with the County Extension Director
Share your organization's goals, the population you serve, and the needs you are trying to address.

2. Identify the Right Extension Program Area
The County Extension Director can connect you with agents whose expertise aligns with your needs.

3. Explore Opportunities for Collaboration
Discuss existing programs, shared audiences, available spaces, outreach needs, and opportunities to develop something together.

4. Start Small and Build
Begin with a workshop, event, referral partnership, or shared project, then build the relationship based on what works

What Could Partnership Look Like?

- **Family & Consumer Sciences**
  Health and wellness education, nutrition, chronic disease prevention, financial education, caregiver support, and on-site workshops. Depending on local capacity, Extension educators may bring programming directly to your organization.
- **4-H Youth Development**
  Intergenerational programming, youth service projects, technology support for older adults, gardening projects, oral histories, and other opportunities that connect young people and older adults.
- **Agriculture & Natural Resources / Master Gardener Programs**
  Gardening education, therapeutic or community gardens, volunteer opportunities, horticulture programs, and connections to local food and agriculture.

Programs, staffing, and available resources vary by county.

Sustainability Plans for the Engage Center

- Request for Proposal for Older Americans Act Supportive Services, Congregate Meals and Home Delivered Meals – Spring 2027
- Continued collaboration with the Jefferson County Extension Office
- Maintaining relationships established through change
  - Legislative
  - County Government
  - State Agencies
  - Local Businesses
  - Community Advocates and Stakeholders

Thank you!

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