

Competencies Needed in the International Agricultural Development Community: A Modified Delphi Study

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The field of international agricultural development has steadily increased because of the expanding world population and demand for food. Increased awareness of international development worldwide has increased development and created a push for more accountability in the developed world. As a result, many college programs in international development are beginning to undergo programmatic changes and are reconsidering the philosophy underlying their missions in order to better prepare students for careers in international agricultural development.

The purpose of this research was to produce an inventory of competencies expected of master's degree-level graduates of international agricultural development programs based on the input of the international agricultural development community. This list of competencies will be shared with universities offering programs in international agricultural development so that curricula may be prepared accordingly to produce career-ready graduates. Objectives of the study were:

1. Identify competencies necessary for international agricultural development graduates to gain employment.
2. Identify personal attributes necessary for international agricultural development graduates to gain employment.
3. Identify key life experiences deemed necessary for international agricultural development graduates to gain employment.
4. Propose curricula for graduate-level international agricultural development programs based on findings of this study.

A modified Delphi Technique study was used for this research. A panel of 21 experts from the international agricultural development community participated in three rounds of questionnaires during spring and summer of 2015. Sixteen panelists from round one completed round two and 14 panelists from round two completed round three. Panelists identified 29 competencies deemed necessary for international agricultural development graduates to gain employment; 16 were determined to be critical competencies and 13 were determined to be secondary competencies. Among the 16 critical competencies were: project management, program design, communication, technical expertise, leadership, and decision making, cultural sensitivity, knowledge and creativity, ethics and integrity, planning and organizing, resilience, team player, adaptability and flexibility, positive attitude, and interpersonal relationship building and collaboration, project/program monitoring and evaluation, contracting, business knowledge, awareness of international agricultural development industry, grant writing, budget management, consulting, and change management. French was the only competency from the language cluster that was found to be a secondary competency. Last, four competencies emerged from the life experience cluster: long-term study abroad, volunteer programs abroad, Peace Corps, internships on farms or ranches.

