

Assessment of ACI Community Extension Coordinators' Program Implementation Experiences: A Basis for A 5-Year Development Plan

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the program implementation experiences of Community Extension Coordinators (CECs) at Aldersgate College, Inc. (ACI), a private non-sectarian higher education institution in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya. Grounded in a phenomenological research design and anchored on an Input-Process-Output (IPO) framework complemented by Theory of Change logic, the study centers the lived experiences of seventeen (17) CECs — the faculty members formally designated to plan, implement, monitor, and report community extension activities in ACI's eleven partner barangays in Solano.

Data were gathered through individual semi-structured in-depth interviews and analyzed using the six-phase thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). Findings reveal that while CECs demonstrate deep commitment to their communities and have developed meaningful best practices in culturally responsive programming, community mobilization, and multi-sectoral partnership management, they consistently encounter structural constraints including workload overload, inadequate institutional resources, limited recognition of extension contributions, and systemic gaps in monitoring, evaluation, and documentation systems.

Drawing on these findings, this study proposes a 5-Year Community Extension Development Plan for ACI that addresses identified institutional gaps, strengthens the CEC role, formalizes support systems, and aligns ACI's extension program with CHED policy mandates, the Sustainable Development Goals, and international best practices in community engagement.

Keywords: *5-Year Community Extension Development Plan, Aldersgate College Community Extension and Social Services (ACCESS), community extension, Community Extension Coordinator (CEC), phenomenological research, program implementation experience, qualitative research*

INTRODUCTION

Community extension has long been recognized as a core function of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines, alongside instruction and research. This mandate is enshrined in Republic Act No. 7722, the Higher Education Act of 1994, which established the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and articulated the development of the country's human resources as a central institutional responsibility. CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 17, series of 2012, subsequently operationalized this mandate by prescribing policy standards and guidelines for community extension programs.

Aldersgate College, Inc. (ACI), established in 1965, is a private non-sectarian HEI in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, offering programs across education, business, health sciences, engineering, and the liberal arts. ACI formalized its community extension program through the Aldersgate College Community Extension and Social Services (ACCESS) office, which coordinates activities across eleven partner barangays in Solano: Aggub, Bagahabag, Bangar, Concepcion, Curifang, Lactawan, Pilar D. Galima, San Juan, Tucal, Uddiawan, and Wacal — established through Memoranda of Agreement beginning SY 2018-2019.

At the ground level, ACI's extension mandate rests with its Community Extension Coordinators (CECs)—faculty members formally assigned by their academic units to plan, implement, monitor, and report community extension activities within their designated partner barangay. Despite the centrality of the CEC role, systematic, institution-specific data on these coordinators' experiences is notably absent. This gap impedes ACI's capacity to improve its extension program, make evidence-informed resource allocation decisions, and develop a coherent long-term institutional strategy for community engagement.

In February 2026, CHED renewed its push for colleges and universities to actively address illiteracy and learning challenges in local communities, issuing a memorandum urging HEIs to integrate functional literacy programs into their community engagement efforts. This directive underscores the need for ACI to assess the current state of its extension implementation and strategically plan for the next five years. By systematically documenting and analyzing the program implementation experiences of ACI's CECs, this study generates the evidence base needed to inform the development of a 5-Year Community Extension Development Plan guiding ACI's extension programming from 2026 to 2031.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to assess the program implementation experiences of Community Extension Coordinators (CECs) at Aldersgate College, Inc. as a basis for developing a 5-Year Community Extension Development Plan. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the roles, responsibilities, and implementation processes of ACI's Community Extension Coordinators in carrying out the institution's extension mandate?
2. What are the challenges and constraints encountered by CECs in planning, implementing, monitoring, and reporting community extension activities?
3. What are the best practices and innovations developed by CECs in community engagement, partnership management, and program sustainability?
4. What are the institutional gaps that hinder the effective and sustainable implementation of ACI's Community Extension Program?
5. What 5-Year Community Extension Development Plan for ACI can be proposed based on the findings?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to explore the lived experiences of Community Extension Coordinators at Aldersgate College, Inc. Qualitative research is appropriate when the objective is to understand meanings, interpretations, and experiences from participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenological tradition, drawn from the works of Moustakas (1994) and refined by Vagle (2018), seeks to describe and interpret the essence of a shared lived experience—in this study, the experience of carrying out community extension work as a coordinator within an HEI setting.

Participants of the Study

The participants were the designated Community Extension Coordinators of ACI — faculty members or academic personnel formally assigned by their respective academic units to plan, implement, monitor, and report community extension activities within their assigned partner barangay. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique appropriate for qualitative inquiry when the goal is to gather information-rich cases directly relevant to the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2015). The inclusion criteria were: (1) current designation as a CEC at ACI; (2) at least one academic year of active service in the coordinator role; and (3) willingness to participate. Data saturation — the point at which new interviews yield no substantially new themes — was reached upon completion of interviews with seventeen (17) designated Community Extension Coordinators across all academic units of ACI.

Research Instrument

The primary data collection instrument was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide consisting of twelve (12) open-ended questions organized into six thematic clusters: (1) opening and rapport building; (2) community engagement and program delivery; (3) monitoring, documentation, and reporting; (4) challenges and constraints; (5) best practices and innovations; and (6) institutional recommendations. Three faculty members with expertise in qualitative research methodology, community development, and HEI extension management validated the interview guide, followed by a pilot test with one CEC-equivalent participant outside the study sample.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered through individual in-depth interviews conducted either face-to-face or via video conference, depending on participant availability. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 90 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' permission. The researcher took field notes during and immediately after each interview. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and returned to participants for member-checking—a procedure recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985)—to confirm accuracy and allow participants to add, clarify, or retract statements.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to analyze the interview data. Phase 1 involved familiarizing myself with the data through repeated readings of transcripts. Phase 2 involved generating initial codes inductively from meaningful segments of data. Phase 3 involved searching for themes by collating initial codes into potential thematic clusters. Phase 4 involved reviewing candidate themes against the coded data and full dataset. Phase 5 involved clearly defining and naming each theme. Phase 6 involved producing the analytical narrative with illustrative verbatim data extracts. To maintain rigor, the researcher maintained a reflective journal throughout to surface and bracket personal assumptions and biases (Finlay, 2021).

RESULTS

This section presents the study's findings based on thematic analysis of semi-structured interview data gathered from seventeen (17) Community Extension Coordinators of Aldersgate College, Inc. Five major themes were identified that collectively describe the landscape of CEC program implementation experiences.

Theme 1: Deep Commitment Amid Structural Overload

All seventeen respondents expressed a profound personal commitment to community service. Fifteen of seventeen respondents (88.2%) described extension work in terms of personal meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. CEC-R14 articulated the motivational core: being a CEC gives a sense of purpose, as one can directly contribute to improving lives and strengthening the bond between the institution and the community. CEC-R15 framed the role as an extension of her professional vocation as a health care provider, calling it a fulfillment of her calling to serve people in all walks of life.

However, respondents consistently exercised this commitment under conditions of structural overload. Ten of 17 respondents (58.8%) cited heavy workload as significantly limiting their capacity for extension work. CEC-R1 described the personal cost of working Saturdays and maintaining a daily five-day teaching schedule with no time for family. CEC-R4 directly noted the inability to meet extension responsibilities given the constraints of the teaching load. CEC-R17 described holding activities on Saturdays to coincide with recipient availability because of limited time during weekdays.

Table 1. Summary of Theme 1 Key Data Points

Dimension	Frequency	Percentage
Expressed personal commitment/purpose	15 of 17	88.2%
Workload cited as limiting effectiveness	10 of 17	58.8%
Cited time poverty/scheduling conflicts	9 of 17	52.9%

Theme 2: Community-Responsive Practice and Relational Capital

Respondents consistently demonstrated sophisticated, community-responsive approaches to extension programming. The most prevalent planning practice documented was conducting needs assessment surveys or consultations before program design, cited by twelve respondents (70.6%). CEC-R8 detailed a participatory approach through consultations, informal interviews, and surveys with community leaders to identify pressing concerns. CEC-R2 described a formalized annual process in which a Needs Assessment Survey is conducted at the start of each academic year to evaluate whether to retain or redesign previous programs.

Several coordinators identified strong relationships with barangay officials, LGU representatives, and community leaders as the single most critical factor in program effectiveness. Thirteen respondents (76.5%) cited LGU and barangay partnerships as most valuable. CEC-R3 clearly described the value structure: LGUs provide local support and credibility, NGOs offer technical expertise, and community leaders ensure programs remain relevant and culturally appropriate. All seventeen respondents (100%) affirmed that student participation provided genuine value beyond simple manpower — with CEC-R2 noting that students serve as co-facilitators and peer mentors who help document the qualitative stories that data often misses.

Table 2. Summary of Theme 2 Key Data Points

Dimension	Frequency	Percentage
Conducts needs assessment before planning	12 of 17	70.6%
LGU/barangay partnerships most valuable	13 of 17	76.5%
Students provide genuine value beyond manpower	17 of 17	100%

Theme 3: Documentation and Monitoring as an Unresolved Institutional Gap

All respondents understood the importance of measuring program impact, but most described current documentation practices as primarily activity-based and compliance-oriented—generating records to satisfy institutional requirements rather than genuinely assess program outcomes or inform future planning. Standard documentation practices such as attendance records, photographs, and narrative reports were the most commonly described approach, cited by ten respondents (58.8%). CEC-R12 identified the core challenge: it is easy to report how many participants attended or how many items were distributed, but harder to measure real impact, such as changes in awareness, behavior, or long-term benefits.

Encouragingly, seven respondents (41.2%) confirmed that they had used community feedback to adjust or improve future programs. CEC-R2 described a notable adaptation in which a formal workshop format shifted to an informal cafe model after residents shared that structured workshops felt intimidating—resulting in higher participation and deeper community ownership. These accounts affirm that CECs are data-responsive in practice, but lack the institutional frameworks to do so systematically.

Theme 4: Institutional Recognition and Professional Development Deficit

Resource gaps and budget constraints emerged as the dominant structural obstacle to effective program implementation, with nine of seventeen respondents (52.9%) identifying them as the most significant challenge. CEC-R2 articulated the impact most analytically: resource gaps make programs reactive rather than proactive, and a community program cannot sustain its pulse without consistent resources. Five respondents cited workload as the primary obstacle (29.4%), with CEC-R11 specifically noting that receiving only three units as an extension coordinator significantly hinders effectiveness. The most requested capacity-building support was project management training, cited by ten of seventeen respondents (58.8%), followed by monitoring and evaluation skills (four respondents) and community engagement strategies (three respondents).

Table 3. Capacity-Building Needs Identified by CECs

Training Need	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Project management	10 of 17	58.8%
Monitoring and evaluation	4 of 17	23.5%
Community engagement strategies	3 of 17	17.6%

Theme 5: Partnership Potential Underutilized

The fifth theme highlights the significant institutional potential revealed by CEC accounts of best practices, sustainability strategies, and reform recommendations. Respondents documented a range of effective activities across livelihood training, education, environmental initiatives, and community health work. CEC-R7 described a community-based chips-making project using locally grown crops, which succeeded by utilizing local produce to support farmers, providing hands-on training, and incorporating local culture by adapting flavors and marketing. CEC-R14 described Project HOPER, which helped young learners in reading and united student volunteers of the department.

On sustainability, nine respondents (52.9%) identified community ownership and participatory planning as the most effective strategy for long-term engagement. CEC-R2 described the mechanism clearly: by involving local leaders in the planning process, they feel a personal stake in the program's success, and the community remains motivated to stay involved because they see the project as their own. On structural reform, CEC-R2 proposed moving from spreading CECs across many areas to concentrating all resources, expertise, and student manpower into one community at a time for deeper problem-solving rather than superficial coverage across multiple sites.

DISCUSSION

This section explains the study's findings by comparing them with its stated objectives and with previous research on HEI community extension, community-based tourism, and sustainable organizational development in the Philippine context.

Roles, Responsibilities, and Implementation Processes

The findings confirm that ACI's CECs are the primary implementers of the institution's community extension mandate, responsible for planning, executing, monitoring, and reporting all extension activities in their designated partner barangays. The CEC role demands simultaneous management of multi-stakeholder partnerships, student engagement in activities, compliance with CHED documentation requirements, and coordination with the ACCESS office — all while carrying full-time teaching loads. This finding aligns with Cañete and Gultiano (2021), who noted that the most effective HEI extension programs have formally recognized coordinator roles and structured institutional support systems. Corpuz, Layug, and Medrano (2022) similarly found that faculty coordinators play a critical bridging role between institutional mandates and community realities — a dynamic clearly evident among ACI's CECs.

Challenges and Constraints

The most pervasive challenge is structural role overload: 58.8% of CECs cited workload as significantly limiting their effectiveness, with extension responsibilities layered on top of a 24-unit teaching load and research obligations. Respondents identified resource inadequacy as the primary obstacle in 52.9% of cases. These findings align with Paulican and Garcia (2023), who attributed significant variation in HEI extension program quality to differences in institutional infrastructure—specifically dedicated budgets, formalized coordinator roles, and structured M&E systems. Documentation and monitoring emerged as a critical gap, consistent with Tupas and Matira (2022), who found that monitoring in Philippine HEI extension programs is compliance-driven rather than learning-driven.

Best Practices and Innovations

Despite structural constraints, CECs have independently developed effective community engagement practices including participatory needs-based planning, discipline-aligned programming, community ownership models, and relational partnership management with LGUs, NGOs, and sector offices. These practices align with the community-based participatory research and extension framework analyzed by Balilla, McHenry, and Molina (2021), which identified participatory approaches as the most productive model for generating both community impact and scholarly output. The 52.9% of CECs who identified community ownership as the most effective sustainability strategy directly reflect Asio et

al.'s (2022) finding that sustainability is most reliably achieved when community members are integrated as active co-implementers rather than passive beneficiaries.

Institutional Gaps

Five systemic institutional gaps were consistently identified: the absence of workload credit for extension responsibilities; lack of a dedicated extension budget at the academic unit level; absence of a standardized monitoring, documentation, and evaluation system; lack of a structured CEC capacity-building program; and insufficient formal recognition of extension contributions in faculty performance evaluation. These gaps reflect what Boyer (1996) identified as the persistent failure of HEIs to institutionally honor the scholarship of engagement at par with research and instruction. Garcia and Uy (2025) similarly documented the structural undervaluation of extension implementers in Philippine HEIs as a significant systemic barrier to program effectiveness.

Basis for the 5-Year Community Extension Development Plan

The findings collectively show that ACI's Community Extension Program is operationally active and community-responsive, sustained by the personal commitment of its CECs, but structurally fragile because of unaddressed institutional gaps. When analyzed through the IPO framework, the findings reveal consistent weaknesses at the Input level — particularly in human resource support systems, financial resources, and institutional M&E infrastructure. These input weaknesses translate into process vulnerabilities wherein documentation is compliance-driven rather than learning-oriented, partnerships are managed relationally rather than institutionally, and program quality depends on individual CEC initiative rather than systemic quality assurance. Through the Theory of Change lens, the analysis suggests that without deliberate investment in these enabling conditions, ACI's extension program will remain dependent on individual voluntarism rather than institutional capacity, limiting both its scalability and sustainability.

The 5-Year Community Extension Development Plan proposed for ACI is designed to transition the program from individual-dependent voluntarism to institutionally sustained, systems-driven community engagement. Priority strategic directions include: formal recognition of extension coordination through workload credit equivalents; establishment of a dedicated annual extension budget managed by the ACCESS office; development and implementation of a standardized institution-wide M&E system; institutionalization of an annual CEC Capacity Building Program; formal incorporation of extension performance metrics into faculty evaluation; and community concentration in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) for deeper, more sustained impact.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative phenomenological study assessed the program implementation experiences of Community Extension Coordinators at Aldersgate College, Inc., with a view to generating an evidence base for a 5-Year Community Extension Development Plan. The findings affirm that ACI's extension program is being sustained by a cadre of committed, community-responsive coordinators who have developed significant informal expertise in the complex relational, logistical, and institutional demands of community engagement work. Their dedication to partner communities represents a genuine institutional asset.

At the same time, the findings unambiguously reveal that this commitment is exercised under conditions of structural inadequacy. CECs carry extension responsibilities without protected time, adequate resources, formal training, or meaningful institutional recognition. The monitoring and evaluation infrastructure is compliance-oriented rather than learning-oriented, and inter-institutional partnerships — while valuable — are managed informally and remain vulnerable to disruption. The central conclusion of this study is that ACI's Community Extension Program has shown that meaningful, community-responsive extension work is already happening—but it remains contingent on institutional investment. The proposed 5-Year Community Extension Development Plan is designed to bridge the gap between what ACI's extension program currently is and what it can become: a strategically managed, adequately resourced, rigorously evaluated, and institutionally valued program that serves as a model of community-responsive higher education in Region II.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are advanced:

A. Policy-Level Recommendations

1. CHED should issue supplementary guidelines specifically addressing the capacity-building and workload management needs of community extension coordinators in private HEIs, closing the current gap between extension policy mandates and implementation support.
2. The Nueva Vizcaya provincial government should formalize its convergence framework with HEIs by embedding HEI extension partnerships into the province's annual development planning cycle and allocating co-funding for joint HEI-LGU extension activities.

B. Administrative/Managerial Recommendations

3. ACI's administration should formally recognize community extension coordination as a significant institutional function by providing workload credit equivalents for CEC responsibilities — a minimum of three units per semester for active coordinators.

4. ACI should establish a dedicated annual extension budget line managed by the ACCESS office, with transparent allocation criteria across academic units, supplemented by an active external grant mobilization strategy.
5. The ACCESS office should develop and implement a standardized M&E system for all extension programs, including pre-activity needs assessments, activity documentation templates, post-activity evaluation instruments, and semi-annual program review protocols.
6. ACI should incorporate extension performance metrics into the faculty performance evaluation system and formally recognize colleges and departments demonstrating the highest levels of extension participation.
7. ACI should consider reducing active partner communities to one or two priority barangays during the initial years of the 5-Year Plan, concentrating resources and expertise for deeper problem-solving, with priority given to Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA).

C. Organizational Recommendations

8. ACI should institutionalize an annual CEC Capacity Building Program covering community development practice, participatory needs assessment, impact monitoring, report writing, and partnership management.
9. The ACCESS office should create a comprehensive Community Partnership Registry — a digital institutional record of all ACI-community partner relationships, MOAs, joint programs, and contact persons — to ensure partnership continuity independent of individual coordinators.
10. ACI should pilot a Community Advisory Group model in at least three partner barangays within the first two years of the 5-Year Development Plan, with a view to scaling community co-ownership of extension programming across all partner barangays by the plan's conclusion.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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