



Strategic Opportunities for Cooperative Extension

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SECTION
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE UNIVERSITIES
AND LAND-GRANT COLLEGES

OCTOBER 2007

NASULGC

A Public University Association

THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

at each of the Nation's Land-grant universities and colleges is a powerful presence in moving the country forward in the 21st Century. As the country's population has changed over the years, historic links to colleges of agricultural sciences and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have expanded to include partnerships across the educational enterprise of the university and to many other federal agencies. The deep connections to citizens at the grassroots level are fostered by close relationships to local and county governments. The local-state-federal partnerships now include new relationships that take educational efforts into all communities and neighborhoods across the U.S. Extension's potential is bounded only by its imagination and creativity. This calls for us to identify and focus on priority areas.

In this new century, opportunities exist to help advance America's greatness in the midst of many challenges. Energy, water, food, environment, health, economic productivity, global competitiveness, and the quality of the living environments are all paramount to the future. Extension is, as a part of higher education, prepared to create new knowledge and to participate as co-learners with others. We are positioned and prepared to engage in education to meet the challenges—opportunities—of this new century.

This Executive Summary portrays the opportunities the Cooperative Extension System envisions in order of importance as defined by sixty-two (62) institutions with Cooperative Extension programs.

Create pathways to energy independence.
89%

Assure an abundant and safe food supply for all.
85%

Sustain profitable plant and animal production systems.
84%

Prepare youth, families and individuals for success in the global workforce and all aspects of life.
84%

Assist in effective decision-making regarding environmental stewardship.
82%

Help U.S. residents to become physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy.
82%

Assist communities in becoming sustainable and resilient to the uncertainties of economics, weather, health, and security.
58%



Create pathways to energy independence.

- Increase knowledge through science-based energy efficiency technologies and energy conservation to develop greater energy independence among consumers (youth and adults in households, farmers/ranchers, and small business, industry, and government sectors).
- Reduce U.S. dependence on fossil fuels through the effective implementation of renewable energy production, transportation, and marketing and distribution systems.
- Build local, regional and state leaders' understanding of the economic impacts and trade-offs of alternative energy production models, and provide the tools they need to address the unintended consequences of the bio-economy.



Assure an abundant and safe food supply for all.

- Reduce food borne illnesses and diseases by improving food preparation, processing, and handling practices at the individual, family, production, and supply system levels.
- Increase limited-resource families' and communities' access to local, safe, nutritious, and affordable foods.
- Enhance consumer's knowledge and understanding of healthy food options.
- Strengthen local and regional food systems.



Sustain profitable plant and animal production systems.

- Increase the sustainability and profitability of agriculture, forestry, and green industries.
- Increase and diversify the number and success of profitable alternative agricultural and forestry enterprises, value-added and niche markets, and organic production systems.

- Strengthen environmentally sustainable non-food and non-fiber agricultural production such as turf, nursery, ornamental horticulture, and equine.



Prepare youth, families and individuals for success in the global workforce and all aspects of life.

- Increase the number of youth selecting science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses, majors and careers by providing multiple ways to engage youth in STEM experiential activities.
- Increase financial literacy and financial independence of youth and adults.
- Build cohesive multicultural communities and workplaces through training, engagement, leadership, and service opportunities for adults and youth.
- Expand workforce readiness in youth and adults through training and retraining that focuses on high-demand skills.



Assist in effective decision-making regarding environmental stewardship.

- Improve water quality and accessibility through seasonal management, watershed protection and enhancement, water- and chemical-sensitive agriculture and horticulture production systems, xeriscaping, and responsible irrigation.
- Build understanding around environmental issues and competing land, including the rural/urban interdependence.
- Increase low impact development, storm-water management, urban forestry, environmentally responsible horticulture, and access to renewable energy.



Help U.S. residents to become physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy.

- Improve overall health and decrease obesity in children, youth, and adults.

- Increase ability to avoid and manage chronic health conditions.
- Improve the health and well being of the growing senior population.



Assist communities in becoming sustainable and resilient to the uncertainties of economics, weather, health, and security.

- Increase civic and social responsibility among youth and adults in urban and rural communities by developing and enhancing leadership, citizenship, and public participation skills through partnerships which lead to sustainable communities.
- Improve community economic capacity through retaining and growing wealth opportunities by developing and providing tools in marketing, entrepreneurship, risk analysis, and decision-making for both adults and youth.
- Enhance preparedness for state and local emergencies by improving communication between community leaders and state and federal agencies, developing strategies for emergency planning, infrastructure design and operation, and by developing community networks that provide educational disaster information.



Current Capacities

Use of these priority statements in the implementation of Extension programs will be done in a context of current capacities and internal opportunities and will vary from state to state, as needs and opportunities vary from one area to another.

- 4-H and other youth are incorporated into all of the above opportunity categories. Youth should be viewed as resources, as well as learners, in helping address all of these opportunities.
- Our strength in agricultural sciences and natural resources is fundamental to Extension both in the present and in the future. These disciplines will be essential in addressing opportunities related to economic productivity, sustainable environments, resilience, and security.
- America's rural communities face many challenges as do many urban communities. Extension's involvement in all communities will build on past experiences and expertise, and on emerging research and knowledge to provide leadership in building a strong future for all Americans.



Internal Opportunities

In developing this set of strategic opportunities, it is important to keep in mind the following internal organizational challenges that must be addressed.

Become more flexible and agile in identifying and serving residents with diverse backgrounds and needs.

- Eighty percent of the U.S. population now lives in urban areas. To remain relevant and accessible to all, Extension must enhance employee's skills and develop programming that addresses issues of urban and non-traditional audiences in addition to maintaining its strength in rural areas.
- Evaluate and modify staffing patterns and expectations to be more flexible and agile; this may include contracts, sub-contracts, and project-based, multi-county and multi-institution employees.
- Increase capacity within Extension for building and working in multi-cultural communities by hiring diverse and multi-cultural employees, and by providing language and cultural training and intensive immersion experiences.

- Enhance programs targeted to the baby boomer/aging generation.

Strengthen and diversify the funding streams for Extension priorities.

- Increase effectiveness in packaging and selling federal funding initiatives:
 - Increase formula/capacity funds to the highest of 5 percent per year or rate of inflation/population growth.
 - Increase the Smith-Lever 3 (d) line for eXtension to \$2.95 million (short-term) and to \$10–\$12 million (long-term).
 - Ensure that at least 25 percent of increased funding for bio-products, regardless of source, is dedicated to Extension.
 - Solidify Extension Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) funding in FY08 budget.
 - Expand National Research Initiative (NRI) funding available to Extension-led integrated projects and expand Extension participation in NRI Integrated projects.
 - Develop a strategy to show the value of formula/capacity funds to those influencing federal funding decisions, emphasizing the leveraging, value and accountability of these funds.

- Expand funding partnerships to allow the CES system to serve as the outreach arm of other federal and state agencies:

- Increase collaboration with potential partners at national, regional, state, and local levels to leverage resources for Extension work.
 - Develop grant writing, budgeting, and management skills needed to be successful in competitive fund acquisition and development.
- Create sustainable funding models that include fees, product sales, gifts, endowments, etc.:
 - Develop sound business plans for new Extension initiatives.
 - Conduct market analysis to identify alternative sustainable funding opportunities.
 - Provide staff development to become confident and savvy entrepreneurs.

Speed up the rate of transformation of CES.

- Develop a strategy to diversify and improve program delivery methods:
 - Fully implement eXtension.
 - Provide staff training on educational design using new technologies.
 - Use multiple language resources.
 - Maximize the use of retired population (baby boomers) through volunteerism to help deliver Extension programming.

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- Improve quality and skills of Extension personnel:
 - Recruit a high quality, diverse Extension workforce.
 - Increase use of Leadership Development for the 21st Century (LEAD 21): Linking Research, Academics, and Extension to train CES's future leaders.
 - Increase internal training of younger faculty to be better prepared for upcoming employee losses through retirements.
 - Communicate with traditional constituencies to seek support for new directions.
 - Promote eXtension as a synergistic opportunity that supports and empowers locally-based Extension educators.
- Develop issue focused, integrated community and economic development programs involving community resources development, agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences and youth development; consider building communities of practice where appropriate.
- Develop an internal accountability and marketing plan.
- Expand CES's base of expertise through partnerships with nontraditional departments/colleges.

**Prepared by the ECOP
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October 2007**

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