How Can We Best Serve Wisconsin Communities in the Future?
Introduction

Between 1906 and 1916, the University of Wisconsin established University Extension, Cooperative Extension and 9XM radio as units dedicated to connecting university resources to the needs of the public. A century later, UW-Extension leads an array of university programs that continue to serve the people of Wisconsin wherever they live, learn, work and play.

Today, UW-Extension faculty and staff continue to work in all 72 counties to enhance the quality of life for Wisconsin residents.

• When you watch Wisconsin Public Television or listen to Wisconsin Public Radio, you are experiencing UW-Extension.
• When you participate in 4-H or Master Gardener Volunteer Program, you are learning from UW-Extension educators.
• When you need research-based agricultural, technology and other information and assistance, you can contact the UW-Extension.
• When you need help with small business development and entrepreneur assistance, the UW-Extension is there to assist.
• When you need coaching on how to get the most for your dollar, or how to plan and prepare nutritious meals, or you would like information on strengthening your family relationships or parenting, the UW-Extension is there to help.
• When you want to advance or widen your opportunities in the workplace, you can turn to the UW-Extension’s continuing education opportunities.

Making Choices for the Future

While Extension in 2015 is working hard to respond to current needs across the state, we are also asking how UW-Extension can continue to remain strong and relevant for another century of service.

To do this, we need your help. The Extension Reimagined issue guide is designed to guide community conversations around what Extension can do to better serve the people and communities in Wisconsin in the future. We have provided three broad options for you to consider, each with potential action steps that might be taken to accomplish the options, as well as potential tradeoffs to consider. No one option is necessarily better than another. Each has strengths and costs associated with it.

We are asking Wisconsin residents to consider each option fairly, to carefully weigh their benefits and their costs. We also welcome new ideas as part of the conversation. In other words, we are not limited to considering merely the three options and associated actions and tradeoffs in this guide. Perhaps, in deliberating together, you and fellow community members will think of other ways that Extension can better serve the people of Wisconsin.

Our Promise

Our promise is to listen carefully to what the public has to say about how Extension can prepare itself to better serve the people of Wisconsin in the future. Trained moderators will help facilitate the deliberative forums while note-takers will capture what is discussed. There is also a short questionnaire that we ask participants to take which will help us learn more about what participants think after the forum. The information we receive will be collated and shared with UW-Extension leaders and incorporated into an institutional strategic planning process. A report of the project findings will also be publicly available on the UW-Extension website.

More Information

This issue guide was framed using information from over 150 surveys from Wisconsin residents and university educators, numerous focus groups held around the state, multiple one-on-one interviews and previous market research about UW-Extension.

For information on the Reimagining Extension project, contact Greg Hutchins, UW-Extension associate vice chancellor: greg.hutchins@uwex.edu or 608-263-7810; or visit http://www.uwex.edu/academic-affairs/reimagining.html
What Does the University of Wisconsin-Extension Do?

University of Wisconsin-Extension fulfills the promise of the Wisconsin Idea. Voiced more than a century ago, The Wisconsin Idea is an exemplary model for university outreach around the world. Today the embodiment of the Wisconsin Idea can be seen every day and everywhere throughout the UW-Extension: in families, communities, businesses, agriculture, nonprofit organizations, tribal nations, classrooms and more. Through UW-Extension, everyone in Wisconsin can access university resources and engage in lifelong learning, wherever they live and work.

UW-Extension programs are delivered by four divisions, each led by a dean/director who reports to the UW Colleges and UW-Extension chancellor.

Broadcasting and Media Innovations

Broadcasting and Media Innovations includes Wisconsin Public Radio, Wisconsin Public Television and the Instructional Communications Systems to educate, inform, entertain, engage and inspire individuals of diverse backgrounds, organizations and communities by connecting them to information, ideas and personal stories and cultural experiences with context that brings meaning.

One partnership of Wisconsin Public Television and Wisconsin Public Radio is wisconsinvote.org, an unbiased election year news and information project featuring an interactive election toolkit, along with Wisconsin-focused election news coverage and archives developed in partnership by both organizations. This project has grown to include live hosted debates and community forums that are broadcast and streamed, vetted candidate profiles, voter resources, news and political blogs, voting statistics and maps, regional and national news partners, and more for statewide and national elections.

Business and Entrepreneurship

The Division for Business and Entrepreneurship (formerly Division of Entrepreneurship and Economic Development) operates the Wisconsin Small Business Development Center Network of centers hosted by UW System four-year campuses to provide no-cost consulting, entrepreneurship education and resources; and the Center for Technology Commercialization to guide entrepreneurs and UW System faculty, staff and students through commercialization of their products and services; the Food Finance Institute collaborative network of food entrepreneurs, finance expertise and investment resources focused on the state’s food sector; and the Manufacturing Diversity Institute to increase participation from underserved communities in the manufacturing industry.

This division also has created the Business Data Center (launching in spring 2015) to advance business research and access to national, state and local business activity and performance data. Programs and initiatives include the Business Data and Research Institute, Youreconomy.org and the Community Data Exchange.

In 2014, this division provided 22,277 hours of one-on-one business consultation and helped entrepreneurs and small businesses that created or retained 782 jobs and acquired $75 million in capital.
Continuing Education, Outreach and E-Learning

This division partners with all 26 UW System campuses to develop and deliver online degree programs, a broad array of credit and noncredit certificates, and other credentials to help traditional and nontraditional learners achieve their academic and professional development goals. This division provides operational support for the UW Flexible Option, a joint undertaking of UW-Extension and UW System that provides a personalized and affordable way for busy adult learners to earn a UW degree or certificate at their own pace, using knowledge they already have.

The continuing education division has built new collaborative degree programs in the last several years: B.S. in Health and Wellness Management; B.S. and M.S. in Sustainable Management; B.S. in Health Information Management and Technology; Bachelor of Professional Studies in Organizational Leadership and Communication; and B.S. in Nursing. Together, these degrees bring together the strengths of 11 University of Wisconsin campuses.

A total of 226,705 students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate credit and noncredit continuing education courses supported by this UW-Extension division (fiscal year 2014).

In addition, UW-Extension operates the Extension Conference Centers (Lowell Hall and The Pyle Center, both in Madison), where more than 58,000 attended conferences, classes and events (fiscal year 2014).

Cooperative Extension

Cooperative Extension, with offices in all 72 Wisconsin counties and three tribal nations, connects people across Wisconsin with the University of Wisconsin, and engages with them in transforming their lives and communities, with emphasis on addressing the local needs of youth, families, government, agriculture, businesses and others.

Cooperative Extension provides education to support Wisconsin’s $88 billion agricultural economy; meets community challenges, strengthens Wisconsin’s families, and supports young people through four program areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources; Community, Natural Resources and Economic Development; Family Living Programs; and 4-H Youth Development. The Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey is also included within Cooperative Extension. Several centers are also part of Cooperative Extension including the UW-Extension Local Government Center and the Center for Community and Economic Development. Serving the entire state, the Leadership Wisconsin program is also supported by Cooperative Extension.

Cooperative Extension educators make more than 1.2 million local educational contacts per year, including 269,000 face-to-face agricultural contacts. Educators also work with 354,000 4-H youth participants.
OPTION 1:

Enhance Visibility and Reach through Communications Technology

Many who have experienced UW-Extension programs and services report having positive views and experiences. However, some Wisconsin residents remain unaware of all that Extension does. Extension has made only limited investments in marketing its services, relying instead on a longstanding positive reputation with its current users. New communication technologies offer an opportunity for Extension to connect with and serve increasingly diverse audiences. Embracing new technologies can also help Extension prepare individuals to participate in a society that is increasingly dependent on electronic forms of communication and a technology-driven economy.

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<th>Examples of What Might Be Done</th>
<th>Some Trade-Offs to Consider</th>
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<td>1. Use social media, and mobile apps and devices to deliver and receive information and programs.</td>
<td>A significant portion of Wisconsin’s population will not have broadband access or be prepared for new technologies and online delivery methods.</td>
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<td>2. Refine marketing and communication strategies to better tell the story of how Extension programs are improving the lives of Wisconsin’s citizens.</td>
<td>Spending on marketing efforts risks shifting significant resources away from program delivery.</td>
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<td>3. Continue to emphasize Extension’s role in providing research-based information directly to local communities.</td>
<td>Demand for face-to-face communication will decline as more information becomes readily available online.</td>
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<td>4. Invest more resources in creating Digital Extension, a service that would provide 24-hour online access to expert views and technical information.</td>
<td>Reassigning resources to online delivery could limit program delivery to existing place-bound services and clients.</td>
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<td>5. Increase educational outreach, training, certification and e-learning to better prepare Wisconsin’s workforce with skills vital to grow and sustain a knowledge-based economy.</td>
<td>Offering online degrees and certificates could lead to overlap of services with technical schools and other colleges and universities.</td>
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**OPTION 2:**

**Ensure Sustainability in a World of Change**

UW-Extension operates in a complex world characterized by increasing demand for services but with continued reductions in state funding. To remain effective, Extension must make changes that encourage efficiency, collaboration and entrepreneurial thinking. This includes finding ways to partner with other organizations to share resources and creating new revenue streams. These and other organizational improvements will allow Extension to continue to meet the needs of the greatest number of Wisconsin residents.

### Examples of What Might Be Done | Some Trade-Offs to Consider

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<td>1</td>
<td>Encourage revenue-generating activities including moving costs to users through tuition and fee-based services, higher fees for certain programs, and other entrepreneurial activity.</td>
<td>This might limit community participation in some Extension programming, especially among the most at risk populations which are unable to afford program fees.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Streamline services by investing in regionally-based programs and infrastructure, and in personnel with expertise in high-demand knowledge areas who will work across geographic boundaries.</td>
<td>This could weaken the close community connections and relationships Extension currently enjoys, eroding trust with clients and making services more difficult to access.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Seek new partnerships and collaborative relationships with organizations Extension has not traditionally worked with, including sharing staff costs where appropriate.</td>
<td>Such actions could further blur lines of authority and decrease accountability of public funds.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Adopt leading business practices and performance measures to encourage efficiency, nimbleness and innovation.</td>
<td>It is unclear how market-based practices will translate to programs designed to meet the needs of underserved populations.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Make the case and advocate strongly for increased public funding of Extension.</td>
<td>This could politicize Extension activities and lead to the tenuous situation of public funds being used for advocacy.</td>
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Re-Prioritize Programming to Prepare for the Future

UW-Extension has a long history of state service and should continue to embrace its core mission of service to the people and communities of Wisconsin. That mission must also be pursued in light of significant demographic and socioeconomic changes taking place across the state. For example, rural areas of the state are losing both population and capital; the average age of the population of the state is rising; and Wisconsinites are becoming more ethnically and racially diverse. To remain viable in the future, Extension should actively adjust its programs, services and priorities to meet the needs of increasingly diverse audiences and clientele.

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<td>Focus a larger percentage of resources and programs on needs and interests of urban areas where a larger proportion of the state’s population is located.</td>
<td>The amount of resources necessary to have significant impact in urban areas could undercut existing successful programs in rural and smaller communities.</td>
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<td>Focus more resources on building capacity for citizen and community empowerment and on facilitating community engagement.</td>
<td>This could reduce Extension’s role as a provider of technical and research-based information.</td>
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<td>Expand programs and services to reach new audiences and the next generation of Wisconsin residents.</td>
<td>Extension resources are limited and investing in new audiences might mean decreased service to traditional programs and clients.</td>
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<td>Introduce more art, design and other culturally-relevant ideas to draw diverse audience participation and involvement.</td>
<td>This could require new investments in resources, relationships and staffing and add new reporting burdens to departments.</td>
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<td>Increase programing that addresses the needs of the business community such as workforce development, entrepreneurship and how to succeed in a global business environment.</td>
<td>Greater focus on supporting the private sector could take resources away from programs that support the needs of traditionally underserved populations.</td>
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Reflection Questions

Individual/Group Reflections
- What new information or insights did we gain?
- What approaches are we most willing to support, and why?
- What approaches are we least willing to support, and why?
- What didn’t we get a chance to work through?

Next-Step Reflections
- What common ground for action emerged from the dialogue?
- What actions are most doable in terms of time, resources and public will?
- What do we want to make sure gets passed on to UW-Extension leaders?