

“Because of UW-Extension” Social Media Campaign



Gov. Scott Walker’s 2015-2017 proposed Wisconsin budget includes a \$300 million base cut to the University of Wisconsin System. This severe and abrupt cut represents an approximate 13 percent reduction to the State of Wisconsin’s General Purpose Revenue (GPR) support for the UW System. Because UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development is part of the UW System, this cut will negatively impact the quality and variety of 4-H Youth Development programs available around the state.

4-H Youth Development programs and resources benefit Wisconsin youth, adults, families and communities. We’d like 4-H members, volunteers, families and other supporters to share messages about exactly how you benefit from our educational programs through the “Because of Extension” social media campaign.

Why Social Media

Emails and telephone calls are very important methods for communicating with lawmakers. And, recent trends suggest comments and conversations over social media are increasingly influential to legislators and their staff. For example, Chris Nehls writes on the *Connectivity* blog, “In a poll of House and Senate offices by the Congressional Management Foundation, three quarters of senior staff said that between one and 30 comments on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter were enough to grab their attention on an issue. Thirty-five percent said that fewer than 10 comments were enough.”

Our Campaign

If you’re interested in communicating with your legislators over social media, think about the following:

- How has your life, business or community changed because of UW-Extension?
- What skills, connections and resources have you received by working with UW-Extension, to help strengthen your life, family, business or community?

Please consider sharing a Facebook post or Tweet starting with the hashtag #BecauseofUWEX.

Crafting Your Message

- Be personal and sincere.
- Include impact data where possible.

Think about brief, personal answers to questions like:

- What skills or leadership experiences have you gained from Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development?
- What has 4-H contributed to your community?
- What partnerships or growth opportunities have you experienced through 4-H?
- How has 4-H prepared you for a future career, or helped you be more successful in a current career?
- How has 4-H changed your life, family or community?

4-H Impacts Examples:

Positive Youth Development

Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development is supported by county, state and federal governments; Wisconsin 4-H returns those investments in the form of positive youth, adult and community development. For more than a century, 4-H has focused on preparing youth for successful careers. The original Extension youth programs prepared young people for the agricultural careers of the time. And today's innovative programs in STEM education, communications and youth leadership provide youth with the leadership, collaborative, critical thinking, decision-making and communication skills they need to succeed in careers that haven't even been invented. [Learn more about the vital role 4-H plays in preparing youth for future success.](#)

Positive Volunteer Development

The capacity of 4-H Youth Development and other UW-Extension, Cooperative Extension programs to reach over 153,000 Wisconsin youth is greatly increased by the efforts of more than 16,000 volunteers. The typical 4-H volunteer gives eight hours a month, according to a 2008 survey of 4-H volunteers in Wisconsin – at the Independent Sector's Wisconsin volunteer time value of \$21.78 per hour, Wisconsin 4-H volunteers contribute \$35 million to the program annually.

Youth reap countless benefits from strong relationships with caring adults, and volunteers also gain from their involvement in Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development. According to a 2008 survey of Wisconsin 4-H volunteers, working with Wisconsin 4-H:

- Gives adults an opportunity for personal and professional growth, including building teamwork, management, communication and goal-setting skills that help them in their careers and workplaces.
- Gives adults an avenue to become more connected with their communities.

Positive Community Development

Wisconsin 4-H is preparing the next generation of leaders through experiences in decision-making and citizenship activities. Youth in 4-H Youth Development programs become actively involved and engaged in local groups, clubs and communities. 4-H youth are 3.4 times more likely to contribute to their communities compared to youth in other out-of-school programs. 4-H youth learn to address local issues and needs and actively participate in discussions and programs that benefit others.

4-H youth participate in service projects and leadership roles where they develop public speaking, leadership, and decision-making skills. These professional skills help them positively contribute to communities as responsible citizens and active public servants. On average, each community club completes five service projects per year. In 2014, more than 1,100 community clubs completed around 5,770 service projects in Wisconsin in such areas as support for the elderly, community improvement, and helping younger children, the disadvantaged and the environment.

Best Practices per Platform

Twitter:

Log in at www.twitter.com through your usual account or access Twitter via mobile app on a smartphone or tablet. Add the hashtag **#BecauseofUWEX** to any tweet you might share related to UW-Extension.

Don't forget that the character limit on Twitter can be challenging. You have 140 characters -- punctuation and spaces included -- to convey your message. This means you will need to carefully plan your tweets.

Consider mentioning legislators from your districts in your tweets. You can mention others by including their username with "@" in front. A mention looks like this: @UWEXCoopExt. [Don't know who your legislators are? Find out here.](#) **Contact your county 4-H educator for help finding legislative social media accounts.**

Remember to never lead a tweet with a mention unless you're replying to someone directly.

- If you tweet "@UWEXCoopExt is the best", followers of yours that follow you AND @UWEXCoopExt will see it, otherwise it will only be seen by @UWEXCoopExt or when people go directly to your profile. If you want everyone to see it, you would add a period before the mention so it would look like ".@UWEXCoopExt is the best"

If you want to include links to news stories, websites or other information, save space by using a link shortener like [Bitly](#), [Ow.ly](#) or others.

A well-constructed tweet would begin with **#BecauseofUWEX** and include a brief statement about impacts, a shortened link to more information (where possible), and your district legislators' usernames. If space allows, please also mention the UW-Extension Cooperative Extension Twitter account, @UWEXCoopExt.

Facebook:

Log in at www.facebook.com through your usual account or access Facebook via mobile app on a smartphone or tablet. Add the hashtag **#BecauseofUWEX** to any status updates or photo/video uploads you might share related to UW-Extension. Photo and video posts are the most eye-catching and popular, followed by links to articles and websites.

You can also tag legislators in your Facebook posts, photos and videos. You can start typing their page name with "@" in front, and Facebook will suggest options for who you're trying to tag. Please tag the UW-Extension, Cooperative Extension Facebook page in your posts, too. [Don't know who your legislators are? Find out here.](#) **Contact your county 4-H educator for help finding legislative social media accounts.**

A well-constructed Facebook post would begin with **#BecauseofUWEX** and include a brief statement about the impact UW-Extension has had on your life, and would tag your district legislators and the

Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development Facebook page. If possible, include a photo, video or link to more information.

Tweet Ideas:

“Because of Extension 4-H, I learned skills that took me to a national stage: <http://bit.ly/1M58qxc> @legislator @UWEXCoopExt #BecauseofUWEX”

“Because of Extension, I have grown in my confidence to lead: <http://bit.ly/1NdA4cT> @legislator @UWEXCoopExt #UWEXmatters”

Facebook Ideas:



“Because of Extension, I have leadership and communication skills that will help me find a good job in the future. @University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension @Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development #BecauseofUWEX”

“Because of Extension, women in agriculture connect to strengthen their families and farms: <https://wiagwomenssummit.wordpress.com/> @University of Wisconsin-Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources @University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension #BecauseofUWEX”

Social Media Directory

[University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension Twitter](#)

[University of Wisconsin-Extension ANRE Twitter](#)

[University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension Facebook](#)

[University of Wisconsin-Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Facebook](#)

[University of Wisconsin-Extension Family Living Programs Facebook](#)

[UW-Extension Community Natural Resource and Economic Development Facebook](#)

[Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development Facebook](#)

Traditional Legislative Contacts

Messages delivered to legislators and decision-makers over phone, email and letters are still very impactful, as are Letters to the Editor in local newspapers. If you're interested in supporting 4-H in a more traditional way, please consider using the messaging suggestions above when thinking about how to tell your 4-H story.

Questions?

Please contact your county 4-H educator or Jackie Askins, WI 4-H Youth Development Communications specialist (jackie.askins@ces.uwex.edu)