Cooperative Extension in Wisconsin -

How we

Listen to your needs

and Partner with you

in County-based University Education ...

Cooperative Extension, a division of the University of Wisconsin Extension, has a 21-word mission:

We “... help the people of Wisconsin apply University research, knowledge and resources to meet their educational needs wherever they live and work.”

This seems simple enough. But when you’re charged with meeting the educational needs of more than five million people spread over 35.7 million acres in 72 counties, the task can appear daunting ...
How We Listen for Your Input

Our statewide program planning is designed to include the range of perspectives, expertise, and values of all of Wisconsin's residents. In each county, we seek to hear from the broad spectrum of members of the community. To achieve this, we systematically involve people from diverse racial/ethnic groups, ages, abilities, and interests during our community input process.

To be sure we cast the widest possible net, we work with representatives of UW-Extension's many partner organizations and stakeholders, as well as leaders of the Extension Committees in each of Wisconsin's counties.

In counties from Florence to Grant, plus 70 counties in between, concerned citizens and community leaders interacted in 1999 with UW-Extension faculty and staff. We used a variety of group participation techniques that provided comprehensive, guided input. This assured that citizens could voice a full range of issues and concerns. Community participants represented nearly all walks of life and age groups, and each came forward with a caring, long-term interest in her or his own community.

Who Represented You

The thousands of people who identified educational needs were drawn from Wisconsin's diverse population. They include Hmong, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native American tribes and agencies, as well as people of Lao and Hispanic descent. They included Mennonite and Amish community representatives.

Occupations of participants included veterans administrator, state legislator,
farmer, circuit judge, mortgage lender, divorce mediator, disabled worker, beekeeper, domestic violence program director, agricultural lender, sheriff, manufacturing executive, technical college administrator, county executive, clergy, hospice worker, town clerk, United Way executive director, consumer credit counselor, mayor, and housing authority director.

Many of the government, community-based and social service agencies that partner with UW-Extension were represented in the input sessions. A partial list includes: Wisconsin Towns Association, Farm Service Agency, Teen Leader Board, Birth to 3, Home and Community Education, Big Brothers/ Sisters, Downtown Revitalization Group, United Migrant Opportunity Services, Community Food Pantry, YMCA, Area Business Alliance, League of Women Voters, Salvation Army, Aging Council.

County-based partner groups included: Land Use Planning Task Force, Child Abuse Prevention Committee, Job Center & Employer Relations Steering Committee, Land & Water Resource Plan Advisory Committee, Dairy Promotion Committee, 4-H Leaders Association, Forage Council, and Pea and Sweet Corn Workshop Advisory Committee.

What You Told Us

People who participated in county and local situational analyses answered this basic question: What issues or concerns do you think should be addressed through educational programs during the next four years in our county? They looked at challenges, as well as their local strengths, capabilities and assets. They sought to identify practical ways to improve their community quality of life and work.

Because we work for you, we listened carefully, and recorded the educational needs, the requests for program resources, and the pressing issues that were raised by these contacts across the state. They were compiled in a 206-page document that has become a guide for Cooperative Extension faculty and staff, and the basis for our extensive follow-up work.

How We Design Education, Based on Your Input

Once we have each county's major concerns, we plan education around these issues. Here's how we do it. Cooperative Extension's program leaders, district directors, state educational specialists and county-based faculty and staff all work on a thorough statewide program planning process, based on the collection of county issues reported.

Our program development cycle is a continuous process of situation analysis, priority setting, design for program priorities, and implementation. Evaluation is done at every step, to insure that we stay on target, and that we identify changing situations.

To maximize the skills of our educators and provide the best expertise we can in each county, Extension has organized statewide programming teams through the four programming disciplines represented in our county-based faculty and staff. These program areas are:

- Agriculture and Natural Resources,
- 4-H Youth Development,
- Family Living Programs, and
- Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development.

Statewide self-directed teams are
organized around specific issues (like the Family Economic Security team) or a specialized commodity (like the Urban Agriculture/Horticulture Team). Each team has developed a plan of work.

The team concept helps to narrow the focus of the work in a given discipline. It also promotes our best efforts at creating programs to solve problems that may be identified in a number of counties and communities, rather than operating as 72 independent offices.

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**Data from the counties reflect the variety of concerns in a state that is both urban and rural, one that has a strong manufacturing base, yet is rich in agricultural and natural resources. Here's a brief sampling:**

- **Youth** need to be ready for the future and need more education on life skills—cooperation, communication, leadership. (Dunn County)

- **Expand involvement** across all UWEX programs relating to land use. Bring people together to solve problems; educate on dealing with potential conflicts by serving as an intermediary. (Manitowoc County)

- **Parent education and outreach** to parents are needed to help them become aware of their importance as positive role models and providers of guidance and supervision. (Door County)

- **Explore additional and alternative methods** of program delivery to meet needs of farmers large and small, full and part-time. (Oconto County)

- **Develop educational programs and opportunities** for youth and adults to interact with diverse populations and minority groups to increase respect, acceptance and tolerance of differences, especially racial and ethnic. (Winnebago County)

- **Provide education** to town officials. Include land use planning, solid waste management, specific educational sessions for officials in similar positions — how they can work together better. (Shawano County)

- **We need parenting classes and education** that provide quality guidance, supervision, values, attention, control and communication skills with children. (Portage County)

- **Educational programs and resources** are needed that provide environmental information to local units of government, farmers, and other landowners on stormwater and erosion control and prevention. (Ozaukee County)
Statewide Programming Teams

Self-directed Cooperative Extension teams include county-based and University of Wisconsin campus-based educators, as well as statewide specialists. Grouped under the four program areas, the teams and their missions are as follows:

**Agriculture and Natural Resources**

**Beef Focus Team**
Provides education to Wisconsin’s beef industry to support a viable, profitable and environmentally conscious and sustainable industry, while increasing public awareness of its economic importance.

**Dairy Team**
Strengthens the competitiveness of the Wisconsin dairy industry through statewide leadership in education and research.

**Fruit Crops Team**
Provides education to fruit growers, targeting issues of food safety, pesticide use, and marketing.

**Swine Team**
Helps producers increase their competitiveness today and in the “New Pork Industry” of tomorrow. The team is a network involving UW-Extension and campus faculty, veterinarians, the Wisconsin Pork Producers Association and allied industries.

**Team Forage**
Develops and disseminates research-based forage crop information so farmers, agricultural professionals and educators can make informed decisions or develop programs to enhance profitability while sustaining natural resources.

**Team Grains**
Enhances the capability of Wisconsin grain crop producers to produce and market grain crops profitably, while protecting surface and groundwater quality.

**Vegetable Crops Team**
Develops, coordinates and conducts effective interdisciplinary educational and applied research programs for vegetable producers.

**Urban Agriculture/ Horticulture Team**
Provides research and educational support for the state’s rapidly expanding horticulture industry. Provides the educational foundation to facilitate the use, production, maintenance and appreciation of horticulture in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

**Emerging Agricultural Markets**
Helps farmers and communities identify and take advantage of opportunities in new and emerging agriculture markets.

**Farm Management Education**
Promotes informed decision-making for improved profits and life styles.

**Food Industry Research, Service and Training (Wisconsin FIRST)**
Helps Wisconsin’s food processors keep pace in an ever more competitive food industry.

**Land Use and Agriculture**
Provides local decision-makers and landowners with the knowledge, tools and skills to make wise choices about the use of their agricultural land resources.

**Marketing and Risk Management**
Fosters programs to increase awareness among agricultural producers and agribusinesses so they can evaluate and manage risk in ways that meet their family and business goals.

**Nutrient Management**
Develops integrated educational programs in nutrient management, recognizing the inseparable nature of crop production, water quality protection, manure management, nutrient management, and social and economic factors influencing farm management practices.
4-H Youth Development

Youth in Public Leadership
Provides youth with experiences and support that enable them to be active public leaders and to engage in public work. An important component of this effort is educating adults to value, accept and coach youth in public leadership roles.

Strengthening 4-H Project Support
Improves 4-H project learning experiences, giving youth opportunity for in depth, long-term advancement in knowledge and skills; exploration of new topics of potential life-long interest; exposure to new career fields; and fun and engaging activities.

Building Capacity Communities for Youth Development
Builds partnerships and collaborations that promote opportunities and support for youth in the community by providing research on youth development and helping communities assess their current level of youth support.

Relating to Others in a Changing Society
Provides opportunities for youth to develop and apply skills in communicating and relating to others. These skills and attitudes include written and oral skills; accepting others; respect; conflict resolution; consensus building; and teamwork.

Issues for Youth in Agriculture
Animals, plants and mechanical objects are exciting learning vehicles for youth. They develop technical skills in these science-oriented fields, and they develop life skills and assets such as responsibility, good decision making techniques, economic implications, communication skills, and good use of recreational time.

Family Living Programs

Food, Nutrition and Optimal Health
Wisconsin’s people have increasingly complex lifestyle choices that can affect health. This team works for improvement of knowledge and skills that affect food choices, physical activity patterns, food handling and practices, food budget management, and evaluation of information. Target audiences include policy makers and partner organizations as well as individuals and families. The team plan has four sections: Food and Activity for Health, Food Systems/ Food Security, Consumer Food Safety/ Quality, and Finding and Using Food Information.

Strengthening Individuals, Families and Communities
This team is concerned with promoting human development across the life span by providing education, support, and technical assistance to individuals, professionals and community leaders. Three primary initiatives are: Building Supportive Communities for Children, Youth and Families; Enhancing Relationships and Supporting Life Transitions; and Supporting Adults Who Care for Children.

Family Economic Security
The purpose of this team is to design, develop and evaluate research-based educational programs to enhance family economic security. It includes programming for individuals, families, communities, and policy makers. Programming focuses on both the availability and the management of economic resources, in five areas: financial literacy, health care, housing, economic security through work, and pressure to consume/ e-commerce.
Community, Natural Resource & Economic Development

Locally Driven Community Development for Sustainable Communities
Communities need educational support to understand economic, social and environmental impacts of their decision making. This includes building community capacity through dialogue, visioning process and sound community development practices. Team efforts include helping communities understand the dimensions of building a sustainable future.

Local Government and Finance
Local officials and the public are given educational support to address government roles and responsibilities, public policy development, funding of public services, government devolution, and keeping an informed public.

Developing Leaders and Organizations
UWEX helps build local leadership capacity through multiple strategies. Leadership education is implemented through organizational development, countywide leadership programs, and local issue-oriented coalitions.

People in the Environment
UWEX educators help communities and individuals explore, understand and develop their environmental values. Programs increase community and citizen literacy and awareness of the impact and interconnectedness of their decision making.

Smart Growth and Its Implications
This team’s educational components include sustainability, natural resources, environment, local governance, leadership development, diversity. “Land use” is an overarching issue that affects both rural and urban communities.

Basin Initiative
The Basin Initiative team emphasizes that success depends on UW-Extension’s proficiency at developing and sustaining a variety of working partnerships. This plan promotes an integration of programs in soil, water, and land use with personal health, wellness, and drinking water quality.
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