



University of Wisconsin-Extension Cooperative Extension

nEXT Generation project

Gap Analysis Executive Summary

January 20, 2017

Gap Analysis Background and Process

The Gap Analysis portion of the nEXT Generation project ran from the beginning of October to the end of November. The goal was to compare the current state of Cooperative Extension against what the organization needs to be doing in the future. From those comparisons, the [nine work groups](#) identified current organizational gaps (what needs to be changed) and used those gaps to suggest what Cooperative Extension should be doing in the future. Work groups were composed of up to twelve members who were identified and invited to work on the project by virtue of their knowledge, experiences, and skillsets. Groups met weekly via Google Hangout or face-to-face meetings to complete their reports. Each group was assigned a particular scope of work on which to focus their efforts. Please note that this should not be interpreted as the 10 most important findings of the work groups. These are 10 themes that consistently appeared across the different work groups.

9 Work Groups:

ANRE, CNRED, Family Living, 4H-YD, Programming Category, Program Development, Statewide, County/Tribal, Organizational Structure Category

Major Themes

1. **Accountability** - To fulfill our mission, Cooperative Extension must demonstrate the results of our programming and communicate those results to our partners and the public.
 - a. Use meaningful and understandable results to communicate the value of Cooperative Extension to stakeholders, inform future programming, and evaluate our success.
 - b. Ensure accountability measures are clear and useful to all partners and staff.
 - c. Consistently collect data to improve programs development efforts.
 - d. Establish leadership that guides and is accountable for program development and evaluation across the entire institution.
2. **Position Descriptions** - Cooperative Extension should update and revise position descriptions to clearly define roles and responsibilities, job expectations, and reporting lines.
 - a. Clearly define roles and responsibilities in position descriptions to clarify expectations.
 - b. Align position description qualifications and competencies with position requirements to improve candidate pools, reduce turnover, and maintain high standards.
 - c. Ensure reporting lines are clear.
3. **Hiring and Recruiting** - People are critical to Cooperative Extension's success. To support this, hiring and recruiting practices are extremely important.
 - a. Streamline the hiring and onboarding processes to make them as effective as possible.
 - b. Offer competitive compensation, career advancement opportunities, and a culture that rewards performance to attract and retain quality professional candidates.

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- c. Increase the organization's intentional efforts to hire staff that reflect the racial and ethnic populations of their counties and who have experience working with diverse audiences.
4. **Professional Development** - Cooperative Extension should offer its employees consistent and relevant professional development.
 - a. Ensure relevant professional development opportunities are easy to locate.
 - b. Provide adequate and accessible funding to meet professional development needs.
 - c. Make professional development a formal expectation of some positions.
5. **Digital Technology** - Cooperative Extension should align its resources with digital technology to offer flexible, accessible, and relevant programming to clientele.
 - a. Reduce and eliminate IT barriers such as: inconsistent access to technology, insufficient hardware, and technology training.
 - b. Expand support for digital delivery of content.
6. **Funding and Grants** - Cooperative Extension should diversify its funding, while keeping funding aligned with educational priorities.
 - a. Support grant writing and grant management with leadership, organizational culture, incentives, and professional development.
 - b. Create and enforce clear guidelines for pursuing new funders to ensure that they support Cooperative Extension goals and priorities.
 - c. Streamline administrative support for grants.
7. **Brand Presence** - Cooperative Extension should be known and recognized in the State of Wisconsin and beyond for its educational programs, applied research, and as a resource for unbiased and research-based facts.
 - a. Make Cooperative Extension a cutting-edge brand that is used to market programming and resources both to existing *and* new audiences.
 - b. Use branding and marketing to make the general public aware of Cooperative Extension's priorities, goals, and impacts.
8. **Administrative Services** - Cooperative Extension should clarify administrative roles and responsibilities and consistently evaluate and improve the effectiveness of administrative services.
 - a. Streamline administrative support functions and processes.
 - b. Reduce the amount of time that educators, specialists, and leadership spend on administrative tasks and functions.
9. **Interdisciplinary Programming** - Cooperative Extension should be nimble and flexible enough to address complex and emergent issues with an interdisciplinary approach.
 - a. Eliminate barriers to addressing issues with interdisciplinary and systems solutions.
 - b. Promote interdisciplinary programming opportunities.
10. **Needs Assessment** - Cooperative Extension should have a common needs assessment process to determine the focus of its energy and resources at all organizational levels for relevant and flexible programming.
 - a. Make this a consistent, routine, and coordinated process across the organization.
 - b. Use the results to make decisions for setting programming priorities, hiring and staffing, and reporting Cooperative Extension's value and results back to the public.