



# **University of Wisconsin-Extension Cooperative Extension**

*nEXT Generation* project

**Needs Assessment Survey Findings**

**January 27, 2017**

## Survey Methodology

The Programming Category work group engaged Jenna Klink, Senior Evaluation Specialist with University of Wisconsin Environmental Resources Center, to advise the work group on the development of the survey tool and analyze the results. The work group surveyed County Board Supervisors and Executives, non-urban Extension Committee Members, and several Tribal Nation contacts to help answer the question, “What are the needs of the state that Extension can and should be responding to?” The respondents were asked to complete a very brief survey to help inform decisions on future Extension program priorities. Cooperative Extension Department Heads were asked to send out additional reminders, and where necessary, make paper copies available for respondents. The survey was open from August 10 through September 12, 2016.

## Response Rate

Of approximately 508 County Board Members total, 213 or 42% responded. Of the 213 respondents, 196 were Supervisors and 17 were Executives or Administrators. There were 36 responses from Brown, Dane, Milwaukee, and Waukesha counties. There were 41 total responses from Tribal Nation governments/partners/organizations, most coming from Brown and Outagamie counties. In total, 64 counties participated. This includes all but Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Manitowoc, Ozaukee, Price, Richland, and Sawyer counties.

## Survey Limitations

- The survey only represented County Extension Committees (including County Boards in Brown, Dane, Milwaukee, and Waukesha counties) and certain Tribal Nation partners. The work group did not have demographic data on County Extension Committee Members in general, possibly resulting in non-response bias. The scope of survey respondents was very narrow.
- 62% of respondents expressed **moderate** certainty that their ratings accurately represent their constituents/stakeholders’ needs (31% **high** and 5% **low**).
- In the end, all needs were ranked as “very needed” or “needed,” which made it difficult to see differences across the state.

## Survey Results

The survey respondents were asked to rank the following 13 issue statements when asked, “To what degree do your stakeholders/constituents need results in the following areas over the next 3-5 years?”

**nEXT Generation project**

*Needs Assessment Survey Findings (Updated November 15, 2016)*

**Response options: 1=Most needed; 2=Very needed; 3=Moderately needed; 4=Least needed**

|  | All respondents | 22 multi-county areas | Urban | Tribal Nations |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|-------|----------------|
| Positive youth development (to be responsible and productive members of the community)                     | 1.6             | 1.6                   | 1.6   | 1.4            |
| Economic development and improved financial capabilities of WI residents, farms, business, and communities | 1.8             | 1.8                   | 1.8   | 2.2            |
| Strong households and families   | 1.7             | 1.8                   | 1.9   | 1.7            |
| Healthy natural resources that sustain our economy and quality of life                                     | 2.0             | 2.0                   | 2.1   | 1.8            |
| Economic security for all WI   | 2.1             | 2.1                   | 2.1   | 1.9            |
| Resilient and profitable agriculture and commercial horticulture   | 2.1             | 2.0                   | 2.3   | 2.4            |
| Improved health for WI residents   | 2.1             | 2.2                   | 2.4   | 1.9            |
| Effective local governments and local officials  | 2.2             | 2.2                   | 2.4   | 2.2            |
| Vibrant community and regional food systems  | 2.2             | 2.3                   | 2.4   | 1.7            |
| Equity, access and opportunity for all WI residents  | 2.4             | 2.4                   | 2.1   | 2.1            |
| Resilient neighborhoods and communities  | 2.4             | 2.4                   | 2.1   | 2.1            |
| Resilient organizations, coalitions and collaborative efforts that can address community issues            | 2.3             | 2.3                   | 2.4   | 2.3            |
| Home/Consumer Horticulture that improves the environment and enriches lives                                | 2.4             | 2.5                   | 2.5   | 2.1            |

In addition to rating the 13 issues above, respondents were asked, “What additional broad issues are facing Wisconsin residents in 2017 and beyond?” Each respondent could list a maximum of two. A team of evaluators and qualitative researchers coded the statements. The five most identified issues included:

1. Limited access to technology
2. Dysfunctional government
3. Under/unemployment

### **nEXT Generation project**

*Needs Assessment Survey Findings (Updated November 15, 2016)*

4. Declining natural resources
5. Limited access to education

## **Major Findings**

- Local officials rated our programming as “most needed” or “very needed.” UWEX educators do good and valued work throughout the state.
- There are some topic areas/needs that point to opportunities for UWEX. Topics that are multi-disciplinary, such as Food Systems or Natural Resources Management, suggest opportunities for greater programmatic collaboration and/or streamlining of programmatic management. Other topics reflect UWEX values and reflect a statewide trend that UWEX can be on the leading edge of, such as Diversity, Inclusion and Equity.
- The local officials survey results aligned with the work group’s analysis and thinking about statewide needs.
- The survey results alone are not sufficient to set direction for programming in UWEX.
- The survey results suggest that Cooperative Extension is doing valued programming and that cutting programs may not be the preferred or strategic option for budget reduction; rather, reductions may need to be realized primarily through structural changes and realignment. This may mean a shift in focus from *what* we do to *how* we do it, and consider whether that provides opportunities for recommendations into the future.