

Survey Results - February Recommendations Feedback

March 10, 2017

On February 9, 2017, the *nEXT Generation* project released the [first set of recommendations on the future of Cooperative Extension from the Integration Work Group](#). These recommendations focused on Cooperative Extension's geographic structure, specifically the partnership with Wisconsin counties. Simultaneously, the Project Management Team and Project Communications Leads released an [online survey from February 9 to February 23](#) to collect feedback on these recommendations. The survey included a [set of targeted questions pertaining to the six recommendations](#). Comments received through the survey, e-mails, faxes and daily phone calls were reviewed by the Integration Work Group for incorporation into the final recommendations for approval by the Executive Sponsors and the Chancellor.

This report summarizes the 305 responses received during the feedback period. Summaries of [future decisions](#) will include information on how this feedback influenced the final outcomes.

Below you will find the results organized under each of the 12 questions. Under each question you will find the top three categorizations (themes), as well as the percentage of respondents that were categorized. Under each categorization there are several bullets that summarize the content of the survey responses.

At the end of the report we have included the number of responses recorded for each question. Please note that the numbers may not always add up to the number of participants due to the fact that some did not respond to questions, and analysis sometimes resulted in more than one category being assigned to a single, complex response. This includes the following information:

- Total number of participants, and total number of those who did not respond
- A breakdown of categorizations, which includes the number of responses that were not applicable (numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of responses that fell under this categorization).

We appreciate your patience with and interest in this project. With more than 100 years of history and partnership between the University of Wisconsin and counties, we take your feedback seriously.

We encourage you to contact us with any questions or comments at nextgencommunications@ces.uwex.edu.

Summary of Survey Responses:

Summary of responses related to Recommendation 1: A Cooperative Extension office should be maintained in every county that is willing to commit to continued funding and facility space for Cooperative Extension staff.

Question 1 - Please describe the potential benefits of this recommendation.

1. Access (19%) -
 - a. Will guarantee continued and convenient access to Extension programs, services, and unbiased knowledge for community members who want to connect directly with Cooperative Extension.
 - b. Will keep the shortest distance between the public and the university system to uphold the Wisconsin Idea.
2. Local Presence (13%)

- a. Will continue a local and physical presence that will keep a connection between UWEX and clientele. The office will serve as a visible reminder of access to Cooperative Extension resources and continued relevance for county issues.
- b. Will contribute to a better understanding of local issues and needs for Cooperative Extension.
3. Relationship Building (13%)
 - a. Relationships with county partners and constituents drive funding decisions and buy-in to Cooperative Extension programming.
 - b. Trust and respect are the foundation of Cooperative Extension's relationships with counties, and these long-term partnerships take time to build. This is essential to facilitating change through programming.
 - c. Strong relationships with stakeholders, county administration, and the public in general helps to engage learners.
 - d. Will maintain relationships with the counties and keep Extension a visible and recognizable physical presence that the community knows and trusts.

Question 2 - Please describe the potential challenges of this recommendation.

1. Funding (22%)
 - a. The cost of maintaining an office and support staff (especially recruiting and maintaining qualified staff) in every county represents a challenge, especially for counties that are already facing budget challenges.
2. Equitable Sharing (8%)
 - a. Even if there is a local office in every county there are concerns that multi-county staff appointments may not be split equally between multiple offices and that these staff may feel "stretched thin."
 - b. Some counties may be less likely to offer space for staff that will only be in-office for a portion of the week.
 - c. Counties that choose not to fund Cooperative Extension programs would still have residents that may need to travel larger distances to a neighboring county's office. There may be frustration if someone arrives to an office and a multi-county staff member is not in-office that day.
 - d. This may increase the response time to issues and questions if someone is serving multiple counties.
3. Expectations (8%)
 - a. Counties and constituents currently have expectations for a level of service and support from Cooperative Extension, as well as local control over investment. These local expectations will need to be managed, otherwise they will remain the same, even though they may not be met under the new model.

Summary of responses related to Recommendation 2: Administrative services should be restructured to cover areas rather than each individual county (please see Multi-County Area map).

Question 3 - What expectations would you have of an Area Extension Director, considering the Regional Director and County Department Head/Director positions would be eliminated?

1. Building Relationships (20%)

- a. Must demonstrate excellence in building strong, positive working relationships with the following groups across all counties within an area:
 - i. County Executives
 - ii. County Administrators
 - iii. County Supervisors
 - iv. County Boards
 - v. County Committees
 - vi. County Support Staff
 - vii. Specialists
 - viii. Educators
 - ix. Citizens
2. Understanding County Needs (10%)
 - a. Must be aware and knowledgeable of each county's needs and expectations within their area to effectively address emerging and existing community needs.
 - b. Must understand the different traditions and dynamics of each county within a multi-county area, as well as how staff are already working to address those needs.
 - c. Must complete needs assessments to identify needs and prioritize local programming.
3. Human Resources (10%)
 - a. Must be skilled in the following human resources management skills
 - i. Recruiting and hiring including selection and onboarding
 - ii. Disciplinary Authority
 - iii. Personnel Management
 - iv. Performance evaluations
 - v. Conflict Management
 - vi. Negotiating Contracts
 - vii. Supervision
 - b. Decision making should involve county partners.

Question 4 - As a local resident, would you be in support of your county/tribe housing the Area Extension Director in a dedicated space (one county of the multi-county area)? Yes or no?

1. Yes (83%)
2. No (17%)

Question 5 - Please explain your answer.

1. Equitable Sharing (27%)
 - a. Perception of favoritism/special treatment if only one county in multi-county area houses the Area Extension Director. This could lead to resentment and/or rivalry between counties. Similarly, the hosting county may feel a sense of "ownership."
 - b. Host county will benefit from more access to the Area Extension Director and receive more of their attention in terms of time and service. Because of this, the hosting county may have a greater ability to influence decisions for their county.
2. Ready to Accommodate (18%)
 - a. Would prefer to host the Area Extension Director.
 - b. Are ready to house the Area Extension Director.

- c. Already have dedicated office space, equipment, support.
 - d. Centralized location in the multi-county area.
3. Effectiveness (11%)
- a. Area Extension Directors will be more effective advocates for their host county.
 - b. Area Extension Directors will be more in touch with the needs of the community that they are housed in, as well as keeping the county connected to Extension issues.

Summary of responses related to Recommendation 3: Regional and statewide programming and staff resources should be made more readily available to communities.

Question 6 - Please describe the potential benefits of a county/tribe offering to house and support the new regional outreach and research positions.

- 1. Access (30%)
 - a. The hosting county/tribe will benefit directly from housing these roles with increased access to specialized programming, specialist expertise, research resources, information, and services.
 - b. Accessible specialists will decrease response-time.
 - c. Counties and tribes will have direct access to specialists with a broad perspective that are also more aware of local needs (vs. being based in Madison).
- 2. Specialization (13%)
 - a. These resources will have a greater opportunity for specialization by allowing them to focus on an area of expertise. Working beyond county borders will give counties greater direct access to knowledgeable subject matter experts and more specialized programming.
- 3. Understanding County Needs (7%)
 - a. These positions will have a better understanding of local issues and needs both within their hosting county and within their region.

Question 7 - Please describe the potential challenges of a county/tribe offering to house and support the new regional outreach and research positions.

- 1. Funding (20%)
 - a. Many of the respondents had questions about how the funding would be split between the county and Cooperative Extension. Who will pay for supplies, mileage, support staff, space, equipment, IT, etc. What happens if one or more counties decide not to house and support this position? Who pays the cost and what benefit do they get out of this?
 - b. Concerns about funding housing and support for a position that will be divided between counties and whether or not it will be worth the cost.
- 2. Equitable Sharing (17%)
 - a. Perception of favoritism/special treatment if only one county in multi-county area houses this position. This could lead to resentment and/or rivalry between counties. Similarly, the hosting county may feel a sense of "ownership."
 - b. Host county will benefit from more access to these positions and receive more of their attention in terms of research, time, service. Other counties may feel slighted in terms of the responses and response times.
 - c. Splitting time equitably between counties is a major concern. Rural counties with high driving times may receive fewer services.

3. Expectations (14%)
 - a. Separating this position from current county expectations for educators. Current expectations are for a position that is dedicated (“belongs”) to a single county. These expectations will vary between counties in a multi-county area. Expectations need to be clearly articulated.

Summary of responses related to Recommendation 4: County and tribal based educator positions should be differentiated to provide more flexibility for county/tribal partners.

Question 8 - Please describe how these proposed changes to educational positions align with your county/tribe's priorities.

1. Bachelor’s Degree Should be Required (14%)
 - a. The minimum requirements for Extension Educators should be a bachelor’s degree or higher, with a master’s degree preferred.
 - b. Concerns that HS or BS minimums for recommended positions lack the necessary qualifications and experience to deliver education and deal with difficult situations. This will require more supervision and a may negatively impact the perception of Cooperative Extension as an academic institution.
 - c. Counties will choose the cheapest educator positions to save money and will “water down” Cooperative Extension’s presence.
2. No Alignment (14%)
 - a. Recommendation does not align with county/tribal priorities, in particular those of small, rural counties.
 - b. Recommended positions may lack the necessary skills and qualifications to meet the needs of counties and tribes, and would be viewed as a step backward.
3. Local Employment Opportunities (7%)
 - a. This may offer flexibility in hiring and create local employment opportunities that would benefit residents.
 - b. This could potentially benefit rural counties that face recruitment challenges.

Summary of responses related to Recommendation 5: Multi-county/tribe educational positions should be formally created to provide broader access to quality services.

Question 9 - Please describe the benefits for a county/tribe choosing to cost-share a position with another county/tribe/area.

1. 19% Cost Savings
 - a. Could save counties money while still keeping the same or expanded access to needed services and resources. In particular, rural counties could save money.
2. 16% Expanded Services
 - a. Could expand access to services/programming that was not previously available without taking on the full-cost of a position. Have the flexibility to access specialized educators at a partial cost to try out additional specialized programming opportunities, and that could be purchased to align with short term/long term goals.
 - b. Advantageous for smaller/rural county needs even if they are unable to fund a full-time position. This is already a current practice used by some county partners.

3. 16% Approve
 - a. Agree with the proposed recommendation. This is already a current practice that has been a positive experience.

Question 10 - Please describe the challenges for a county/tribe choosing to cost-share a position with another county/tribe/area.

1. Equitable Sharing (25%)
 - a. Accountability for the time and services that an educator is providing to each county proportional to the percentages of time that the counties are funding - who determines this and how is it done? If this is not handled appropriately and expectations are not met, it could lead to some counties feeling like they are not getting "their fair share."
 - b. These positions may be pulled in too many directions and spread too thin, especially if counties have expectations of a full-time position.
 - c. Perceptions that the host county will receive more attention and will receive first priority.
2. County Expectations (18%)
 - a. Making sure that these positions have clearly defined expectations in position descriptions that are known and understood by all counties within their area.
 - b. Managing expectations that the position will be shared with other counties, will not be full-time, and will not physically be available at all times.
3. Travel (12%)
 - a. Sharing these positions between counties will mean increased travel time. The increased amount of time spent on travel has several impacts:
 - i. Reduces the time spent on services to the county.
 - ii. Needs to be accounted for by someone to make sure that county expectations are met.
 - iii. Is stressful and could impact morale depending on the expectations (quantity, time of day, expense policy).

Summary of responses related to Recommendation 6: New and updated agreements should be developed between county and tribal partners and Cooperative Extension to ensure accountability, transparency, and effective service delivery.

Question 11 - Please describe the benefits a county/tribe would see from paying a flat fee for educational services.

1. Easier to Budget (46%)
 - a. Eliminates many budget issues and will be make budgets easier to plan knowing the costs up front. Will also have the following benefits:
 - i. Simplicity - easier to budget annual funds knowing them ahead of time
 - ii. Consistency - less variability with standardized costs
 - iii. Clarity - more transparent costs
 - iv. Predictability - certainty of costs
2. Simplifies Contracting (9%)
 - a. Contracting process is streamlined and can define standard processes and expectations that will eliminate many budgeting issues.
3. Clarifies Expectations (7%)

- a. Clarifies employer (State) and lines of authority.
- b. Clarifies commitments between Cooperative Extension and Counties.

Question 12 - Please describe the challenges a county/tribe would see from paying a flat fee for educational services.

- 1. Cost (19%)
 - a. Even if the flat fee is the same cost as what the counties currently pay, they will have challenges paying for services and employees if they have no hiring authority over those positions.
 - b. Flat fees that cost more than what have historically been budgeted. Keeping the services affordable.
 - c. Determining who will pay for costs that are not included in the flat fee.
- 2. Quality of Service (10%)
 - a. Concerns that counties will be paying the same flat fee amounts for educators with different levels of experience and will not get return on their investments.
 - b. Different level of service from staff that are not housed in their county.
- 3. County Control (9%)
 - a. Counties will have less authority over the hiring process, employees, and service.

February Feedback Survey Summary Statistics

Demographics

- 305 total respondents
- Breakdown of the 241 participants that responded with their relationship to Cooperative Extension:
 - 132 - Cooperative Extension Employees
 - 77 - County Partners
 - 32 - Other (citizens, volunteers, farmers, etc.)
- Breakdown of the 125 participants that responded with their Cooperative Extension Employee Type:
 - 77 - Faculty
 - 42 - Academic Staff
 - 6 - University Staff
- Breakdown of the 64 participants that responded with their County:
 - 19 - Northwest Region
 - 20 - North Central Region
 - 17 - East Metro Region
 - 8 - Southwest Region

Recommendation 1: A Cooperative Extension office should be maintained in every county that is willing to commit to continued funding and facility space for Cooperative Extension staff.

Question 1 - Please describe the potential benefits of this recommendation.

- Of the 305 participants total, 41%, (126) did not respond.
- Categorizations (2 categorizations per respondent [610] - There were 300 categorizations of N/A - which left 310 categorizations broken down below):
 - 19% Access (59)
 - 3% Continuity (9)
 - 13% Local Presence (40)
 - 13% Relationship Building (41)
 - 4% Shortest Distance (11)
 - 3% Visibility (10)
 - 6% Wisconsin Idea (19)
 - 39% Other - 45 (30 other categories)

Question 2 - Please describe the potential challenges of this recommendation.

- Of the 305 Participants total, 47%, (142) did not respond.
- Categorizations (2 categorizations per respondent [610] - There were 322 categorizations of N/A - which left 288 categorizations broken down below):
 - 5% County Buy-In (14)
 - 8% County Expectations (22)
 - 8% Equitable Sharing (23)
 - 22% Funding (63)

- 3% Support Staff (9)
- 4% Travel (12)
- 50% Other (145) - (25 other categorizations)

Recommendation 2: Administrative services should be restructured to cover areas rather than each individual county (please see Multi-County Area map).

Question 3 - What expectations would you have of an Area Extension Director, considering the Regional Director and County Department Head/Director positions would be eliminated?

- Of the 305 participants total, 42%, (128) did not respond
- Categorizations (3 categorizations per respondent [819] - There were 497 categorizations of N/A - which left 322 categorizations broken down below):
 - 20% Building Relationships (66)
 - 10% Human Resources (32)
 - 10% Understanding County Needs (31)
 - 9% Budget (28)
 - 9% Accountability Functions (28)
 - 8% Attending Meetings (25)
 - 6% Communications (18)
 - 6% Leadership (18)
 - 24% Other (76) - (18 other categorizations)

Question 4 - As a local resident, would you be in support of your county/tribe housing the Area Extension Director in a dedicated space (one county of the multi-county area)? Yes or no?

- 305 Responses Total
- Yes/No/N/A Breakdown
 - 54% responded "N/A"(166)
 - 38% responded "Yes" (115)
 - 8% responded "No" (24)
- Yes/No Breakdown Excluding N/A (139 responses)
 - 83% Responded "Yes"
 - 17% responded "No"

Question 5 - Please explain your answer.

- Categorization Breakdown (2 Categorizations per respondent [610] there were 457 categorizations of N/A, which left 153 categorizations broken down below):
 - 27% Equitable Sharing (42)
 - 18% Ready to Accommodate (28)
 - 11% Effectiveness (17)
 - 8% State/Support Staff must be State Funded (13)
 - 6% Centralized (9)
 - 30% Other (44) - (12 other categorizations)

Recommendation 3: Regional and statewide programming and staff resources should be made more readily available to communities.

Question 6 - Please describe the potential benefits of a county/tribe offering to house and support the new regional outreach and research positions.

- Of 305 respondents, 50% (152) did not respond
- Categorization Breakdown (2 Categorizations per respondent [610] there were 408 categorizations of N/A, which left 202 categorizations broken down below):
 - 30% Access (61)
 - 4% Benefits Citizens (9)
 - 3% Cost Savings (7)
 - 4% Favors Hosting County (8)
 - 13% Specialization (27)
 - 7% Understanding County Needs (15)
 - 39% Other (75) - (22 other categorizations)

Question 7 - Please describe the potential challenges of a county/tribe offering to house and support the new regional outreach and research positions.

- Of 305 respondents, 51% (156) did not respond
- Categorization (2 Categorizations per respondent [610] there were 396 categorizations of N/A, which left 214 categorizations broken down below):
 - 14% County Expectations (30)
 - 17% Equitable Sharing (36)
 - 20% Funding (43)
 - 8% Space (17)
 - 5% Travel (10)
 - 36% Other (78) - (15 other categorizations)

Recommendation 4: County and tribal based educator positions should be differentiated to provide more flexibility for county/tribal partners.

Question 8 - Please describe how these proposed changes to educational positions align with your county/tribe's priorities.

- Of 305 respondents, 48% (145) did not respond
- Categorizations (2 Categorizations per respondent [610] there were 391 categorizations of N/A, which left 219 categorizations broken down below):
 - 5% Aligned (12)
 - 14% Bachelor's degree should be required (31)
 - 5% County Expectations (11)
 - 5% Flexibility (10)
 - 7% Local Employment Opportunities (16)
 - 6% Need more info (13)
 - 14% No alignment (31)
 - 6% Some Alignment (14)

- 38% Other (81) - (27 other categorizations)

Recommendation 5: Multi-county/tribe educational positions should be formally created to provide broader access to quality services.

Question 9 - Please describe the benefits for a county/tribe choosing to cost-share a position with another county/tribe/area.

- Of 305 respondents, 51% (156) did not respond
- Categorization (2 Categorizations per respondent [610] there were 404 categorizations of N/A, which left 206 categorizations broken down below):
 - 16% Approve (33)
 - 19% Cost Savings (39)
 - 9% Cost Sharing (19)
 - 16% Expanded Services (32)
 - 10% Specialization (21)
 - 30% Other (62) - (19 other categorizations)

Question 10 - Please describe the challenges for a county/tribe choosing to cost-share a position with another county/tribe/area.

- Of 305 respondents, 49% (150) did not respond
- Categorization (2 Categorizations per respondent [610] there were 365 categorizations of N/A, which left 245 categorizations broken down below):
 - 11% Accountability (26)
 - 18% County Expectations (44)
 - 25% Equitable Sharing (61)
 - 12% Travel (30)
 - 34% Other (84) - (21 other categorizations)

Recommendation 6: New and updated agreements should be developed between county and tribal partners and Cooperative Extension to ensure accountability, transparency, and effective service delivery.

Question 11 - Please describe the benefits a county/tribe would see from paying a flat fee for educational services.

- Of 305 respondents, 53% (163) did not respond
- Categorization (2 Categorizations per respondent [610] there were 461 categorizations of N/A, which left 149 categorizations broken down below):
 - 7% Approve (10)
 - 7% Clarifies Expectations (11)
 - 46% Easier to Budget (68)
 - 6% Focus on position versus individual (9)
 - 9% Simplifies contracting (13)
 - 25% Other (38) - (11 other categorizations)

Question 12 - Please describe the challenges a county/tribe would see from paying a flat fee for educational services.

- Of 305 respondents, 52% 160 did not respond
- Categorization (2 Categorizations per respondent [610] there were 408 categorizations of N/A, which left 202 categorizations broken down below):
 - 19% Cost (38)
 - 9% County Control (18)
 - 8% County Expectations (16)
 - 6% Focus on position versus person (12)
 - 5% Mid year renegotiations (11)
 - 8% Per capita equity issued (17)
 - 10% Quality of service (20)
 - 35% Other (70) - (18 other categorizations)