

2017-2018 Needs Assessment Community Statewide Summary

Introduction

NC State Extension's 2017-2018 needs assessment process incorporates a multi-method approach to collecting county trend data and stakeholder input related to educational and service needs in agriculture, nutrition and health, youth development, and community and rural development. The stakeholder group of interest in the community phase of data collection is current and potential program participants, advisory leadership, community partners, and other stakeholders. Input from the community was collected in a twofold manner; by using electronic and print surveys and conducting focus groups. Community surveys were received from 2,138 program participants, potential program participants, or other stakeholders representing 84 of North Carolina's 100 counties and focus groups were held in 65 counties. Information from the community and stakeholder groups is provided to state Extension leadership in aggregate form to guide statewide program planning efforts and provided in disaggregated form to County Extension Directors to guide county level planning.

Overall Satisfaction with Extension Services

Community members were asked to identify their level of satisfaction with programs and services provided by Extension. Approximately half of those responding are extremely satisfied and cumulatively over 85% are either somewhat or extremely satisfied.

Satisfaction with the programs and services provided by NC Cooperative Extension

Extremely satisfied	49.7%
Somewhat satisfied	36.6%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10.8%
Somewhat dissatisfied	2.4%
Extremely dissatisfied	0.5%

Program and Service Delivery

Community members identified their preferred methods of receiving Extension programs and services. The table below shows that the top three methods are workshops/classes, field days/demonstrations, and online/web based classes.

Best ways for NC Cooperative Extension to deliver educational programs and information

Workshops/Classes	88.8%	Printed Materials (fact sheets, newsletters)	50.1%
Field Days/Demonstrations	70.7%	Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)	48.4%
Online/Web-based Classes	58.8%	Videos (YouTube)	47.9%
Farm Visits	56.1%	Newspaper Articles	30.2%
Website	55.2%	Radio/TV	26.0%
Personal Contacts	52.7%		

In an effort to gauge what is perceived to be the most needed work performed by Extension, focus groups began with the question; *What do you believe is the most important issue or challenge facing our county and why is this such an important issue or challenge?* Focus group participants identified a number of issues being faced within communities in North Carolina. Some issues identified include drugs/opioid abuse, the lack of jobs and workforce development, farmland preservation, and the quality of the education system.



Community surveys inquired about the priority Extension should place on a range of community programs. The identified highest priority programs include farmland preservation, protection of air and water quality, safety of the food supply, assisting beginning farmers, strengthening the local food system, and promoting economic development.

	High Priority	Some Priority	Little or No Priority
Preserving agricultural farmland	74.7%	22.4%	2.9%
Protecting air and water quality	74.6%	22.2%	3.2%
Ensuring safe food handling practices to prevent food-borne illness	69.0%	26.4%	4.6%
Assisting farmers and beginning farmers in agricultural production and profitability	68.3%	28.4%	3.3%
Strengthening the local food system	67.2%	30.3%	2.5%
Creating jobs and promoting economic development	60.8%	32.5%	6.7%
Helping rural communities develop, promote, and implement sound economic strategies to improve the quality of life	58.3%	36.0%	5.6%
Creating and enhancing employment in the agricultural sector	48.4%	44.9%	6.7%
Assisting farmers and beginning farmers in agricultural production and profitability	48.4%	44.9%	6.7%

	High Priority	Some Priority	Little or No Priority
Assisting local government and businesses with land use decisions	48.3%	41.6%	10.1%
Helping communities be better prepared for natural disasters	48.0%	41.2%	10.8%
Building resilient communities through coalitions and collaborative efforts	41.3%	47.9%	10.8%
Helping communities and businesses become more energy efficient	41.2%	45.1%	13.6%
Helping urban counties with smart growth and economic and social prosperity	37.9%	42.5%	19.6%
Building the capacity of nonprofits and community leaders	31.2%	49.8%	19.0%

Community surveys also inquired about the priority Extension should place on a range of programs for individuals and families. The identified highest priority programs were access to affordable healthy food, youth development, STEM literacy, and reducing obesity.

To what extent should each identified program area for individuals and families be a priority for Extension

	High Priority	Some Priority	Little or No Priority
Ensuring individuals and families have access to affordable healthy food	72.8%	23.4%	3.8%
Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and life skills	70.5%	25.6%	3.9%
Increasing youth STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) literacy	65.2%	29.5%	5.3%
Reducing obesity through education about healthy food choices, healthy food preparation, and exercise	60.4%	32.7%	6.8%
Building healthy and strong families through parenting education	59.2%	33.0%	7.7%
Strengthening youth workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and business development skills	59.1%	34.8%	6.1%
Building family financial literacy skills	56.3%	35.2%	8.6%
Strengthening workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and business development skills among adults	50.9%	39.9%	9.2%
Helping households reduce water use and maintain water quality	48.8%	39.6%	11.6%
Educational opportunities about home, community, and school gardening	45.1%	46.9%	8.0%
Composting, reusing and recycling consumer goods	44.2%	44.9%	10.9%
Educational opportunities about home food safety practices, food preservation, and canning	43.8%	47.6%	8.6%
Educational opportunities to promote healthy homes (mold, home safety, etc.)	39.6%	48.3%	12.1%
Educational opportunities to help households increase energy efficiency	34.8%	50.1%	15.1%

Agriculture and Food

A core program area for NC State Extension is agriculture and food production. Information to guide future programming in this program area was gathered by asking focus group participants about the greatest agricultural challenges and the program and service needs. Several challenges were identified, the greatest being land use. There is community concern about protecting farmland and the affordability of farmland, uncontrolled development, urbanization, and fewer farms as a result of aging farmers and less transition of farms to younger generations. Other concerns include a shortage of labor and increased labor costs as a result of changing immigration policies. There is concern about the increased regulation of farming and agricultural products including GAP certification and FSMA requirements. Profitability of farming is also a challenge due to high startup costs for new farms, increased input costs and decreased commodity process.

Most Important Agricultural or Food Production Challenge



Focus group participants identified future priorities in agriculture and food production for extension programs and services. Agriculture awareness and community knowledge of the food system was identified as important for Extension to prioritize. In addition, consumer horticulture including home and community gardens should be a priority for future extension programs. Work with producers was also identified as important including growing and selling local foods, ways to increase profitability, business practices, agribusiness, sustainability, and diversification of production. In addition Extension should continue to provide pesticide and farm safety training. Programs to promote the use of new and emerging technologies should be provided to improve farm profitability and production yields.

Future Priorities in Agriculture and Food Production

ag awareness



Health & Nutrition

The second core program area for NC State Extension is health and nutrition. The abuse of opioids and other drugs was identified as the greatest community health challenge. Other challenges relate to the lack of facilities and/or the cost of gym memberships, recreation centers, and exercise facilities. This includes the lack of walking and bike trails, sidewalks, and other walkable areas. Another challenge centers around the location of programs and services and the lack of transportation. Focus group members noted the importance of offering programs in multiple community locations. Finally, it was noted that marketing efforts of Extension programs is lacking and many people are not aware of the programs and services offered by Extension.

Most Important Health and Nutrition Challenge



[illegible]

The third core program area for NC State Extension is 4-H Youth Development. In regard to challenges facing this population, a highly cited challenge among youth is substance abuse. Other challenges involve the lack of parenting skills, family dysfunction, changing family structure, and the lack of parental involvement. Screen time and technology overuse is another challenge facing the youth in North Carolina. The location of programs and the lack of transportation to attend programs is another challenge faced by youth. Youth also face a number of challenges as a result of the lack of mental health services, peer pressure, bullying, and the lack of mentors and positive role models.

substance abuse

parenting skills

program awareness

family dysfunction

technology overuse

parental involvement

mentors

recreation facilities

mental health

peer pressure

bullying

role models

poverty

obesity

program cost

program location

volunteers

social media

gangs

single parents

program facilities

food insecurity

delinquency

crime

To address the challenges faced by youth, future priorities in youth development should include both awareness and educational programming in agriculture. Youth programming should also focus on providing extracurricular activities, programs, and other recreational activities that promote life and interpersonal skill development. Youth programs should also promote the development of a work ethic and vocational and trade skills in youth.

Future Priorities in Youth Development

