

**NEWS RELEASE – November 13, 2013**

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**N.C. Cooperative Extension Service launches visioning initiative to map its future**

*Nearly century-old organization prioritizing programs, addressing change as centennial approaches*

RALEIGH, N.C. – The [North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service](#) has launched a strategic visioning and planning initiative to evaluate the organization’s business model, adapt accordingly to the current economic environment and devise a strategy going forward. The Cooperative Extension Service in North Carolina has seen recurring federal and state budget cuts of around \$20 million since 2000, resulting in the loss of roughly 90 positions – mostly at the county level – over the past four years.

“We are at the point where we must prioritize what we can do best with the staffing that our funding will support,” said Dr. Joe Zublena, N.C. Cooperative Extension Service director. “The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service has provided a century’s worth of education and solutions that help families and communities succeed. Through this initiative, priority one is to ensure another 100 years of trusted service for the people of North Carolina.”

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service (NCCES) is part of N.C. State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) and a national Cooperative Extension network. NCCES partners with county and tribal governments and N.C. A&T State University’s Cooperative Extension Program to provide research-based educational programs in 4-H, Agriculture, Family & Consumer Sciences and Community Development to citizens in all 100 counties and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation.

As part of the strategic vision initiative, the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service is holding a series of [12 listening sessions across the state in November and December 2013](#). The organization is seeking input from employees, local governments and community partners as it addresses current economic challenges and positions itself for long-term success going into its centennial celebration. Participant feedback will be reviewed continuously and will assist in the development of an action plan to better meet the needs of NCCES and its partners.

A website has been developed to share information and materials regarding the strategic vision initiative and to provide people an opportunity to submit feedback: [www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative).

In addition to listening sessions, a visioning committee and local meetings will help facilitate the process needed to prioritize the organization’s programs and define its future. The goal is to have a strategic plan in place by May 2014, when the Cooperative Extension Service celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> year of service.

The organization has enlisted the services of [FountainWorks](#), a Raleigh-based management and facilitation consulting firm, to assist the leadership team and committees throughout the process.

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Despite the current challenges and staffing constraints, the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service, part of the second-largest Cooperative Extension system in the nation, had an economic impact of nearly \$200 million in 2012 and engaged more than 40,000 volunteers across the state. ([View an organization fact sheet.](#))

“I firmly believe that the Cooperative Extension Service is as needed now as it ever has been,” said Zublena. “ I also believe that if we do not change, our next 100 years will not reflect the same excellence and impacts achieved in our first 100 years. This is a journey we have to make together with our employees and partners, and I believe that collectively we’ll navigate the Cooperative Extension Service through this process to another century of success.”

The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service was founded in 1914, in conjunction with the [national Cooperative Extension System](#), as part of the Smith-Lever Act. The organization will officially turn 100 on May 8, 2014.

### **About the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service**

Established in 1914, the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service (NCCES) is part of N.C. State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) and a national Cooperative Extension network. The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service partners with county and tribal governments and N.C. A&T State University’s Cooperative Extension Program to provide seamless educational programs that enrich the lives, land and economy of North Carolinians. Extension programs meet people’s needs, supply decision-makers with unbiased data and help individuals, families and communities succeed. Discover more at [www.ces.ncsu.edu](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu).

### **Useful Links & Resources**

**N.C. Cooperative Extension Service Strategic Visioning & Planning Initiative Website:**  
[www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative)

**Listening Sessions Schedule:** [www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative/listening-sessions](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative/listening-sessions)

**Register for Listening Sessions:** [http://go.ncsu.edu/2013\\_ncces\\_listening\\_sessions](http://go.ncsu.edu/2013_ncces_listening_sessions)

**N.C. Cooperative Extension Strategic Framework Sheet:**  
[http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/files/library/0/Strategic\\_Framework\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/files/library/0/Strategic_Framework_FINAL.pdf)

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