

Creating our Future
North Carolina Cooperative Extension
Community Listening Session
**Swain County Technology & Training Center, Bryson
City**
November 21, 2013

In November and December 2013, NC Cooperative Extension held 12 regional listening sessions and meetings with its employees and stakeholder groups, including county governments, commodity groups, community organizations and others. Approximately 45 people attended the Community Listening Session at the Swain County Technology & Training Center in Bryson City to provide input into the visioning initiative, *Creating our Future*. Dr. Joe Zublena, Associate Dean and Director of NC Cooperative Extension Service, welcomed the participants and shared background information on the changes Cooperative Extension is facing. The goals of the visioning initiative are:

1. Define and focus on our most competitive and needed programs
2. Strengthen our impacts and value to citizens, the counties, & North Carolina
3. Create a financial buffer and gain flexibility to stay aligned to priorities
4. Develop a staffing model that aligns to our new fiscal reality and provides competitive salaries and a better quality of life to our employees

Working in small groups at their tables, participants discussed the questions posed to them and recorded their responses onto paper templates. The instructions provided to the participants and the detailed responses to each question are included in this document.

Participants were encouraged to provide additional input and to continue to monitor the progress of the visioning initiative on the website: www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative



THE BIG PICTURE

What are the important issues in your community that brought you to this conversation today?

- I have always relied on Extension for my orchard, bees, organic gardening
- We in the west have to live off the land...Cooperative Extension helps teach folks how to grow their own food
- Livestock is the one agricultural industry that could grow in the west, but we do not have a livestock agent
- Swain staff does a lot and we need them
- 4-Her gave a mini-presentation ... Extension is crucial
- We are going to have to feed more people. If we chop off Extension the research is not going to get to the people who need it...must continue to have Extension to make the connection from land grants to growers
- If not for Swain Extension, Swain Community Center could not survive. Extension in the west keeps community centers going.
- Visioning Team member stated she was there in order to be able to hear and relay western stakeholders concerns to entire Visioning Team
- Agent from Eastern Cherokee Band stated she was there to advocate for youth programs
- Farmers need guidance from Extension
- Western NC Fair would not survive without Extension nor would many smaller fairs
- Mountain Research and Extension Center (Mills River) is a huge help to west
- If the NC Dept of Ag wants to promote anything I go to Extension (employee of NCDA &CS)
- Must grow more farmers! Extension is the lead resource in doing this.



PROGRAMS & ORGANIZATION

PROGRAMS: When you think about Extension’s value, where can this organization have the greatest impact in your community and the state? What are the programs/services in your county that Extension must “sow or grow” and tell us why. What are the programs/services in your county that Extension could “prune or plow” and tell us why.

ORGANIZATION: Think about how Extension will have to make organizational and staffing changes to thrive in this new reality. (How might it prune back?) Thinking about the best interests of your county/community, how can Extension partner with you in a new and different way to meet your needs? What won’t work as Extension considers new and different ways to partner with your community?

Ideas to Sow & Grow	Ideas that Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Become stronger with community development, i.e. working to develop stronger community centers - Diverse education of agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community garden - exposure to diversity for children and entire community - agents know what their community needs - specialize programs for rural/Appalachian communities - 4-H <p><u>Reasons Why:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - because community centers can do more than one Extension agent—makes people more aware of what Extension does - rural here is different than rural at the coast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4-H, STEM - Aging programs—SHIIP, SNAP-ED - Community development - Healthy lifestyle choices - Beekeepers’ ed - Master Gardeners - Back to Basics <p><u>Reasons Why:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demographic shifts - impacts! - behavior changes
Ideas to Prune & Plow	Ideas that Don’t Work
	<p>Programs without agents to deliver services/programs that do not fit community’s needs</p>

<p>Ideas to Sow & Grow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EDUCATION – to our commissioners and general public about programs - ID a lobby group to advocate - marketing/branding Cooperative Extension - representation - less office time, more community interaction - importance of Agriculture Education—“cradle to the grave” - utilizing resources between agencies/partnerships - focus on agriculture production - youth education and personal growth/development - recruit interns - specialized tax for Extension to fund positions <p><u>Reasons Why:</u> We (the public) don’t know who our contacts are</p>	<p>Ideas that Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one-on-one relationships - targeting a young audience, which carries Extension education through adulthood - passionate, caring agents - the desire to assist/educate individuals, children and farmers (passion) - education of diversity within an individual/work plan
<p>Ideas to Prune & Plow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - top heavy positions - reporting that is excessive and duplicative - “regional” positions - replication of services - hiring freeze or amount of time to fill vacant positions - focus on roots—mission—with future growth <p><u>Reasons Why:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cumbersome reporting (results in less face time with our customers/community) - sharing agents across counties doesn’t work 	<p>Ideas that Don’t Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not filling positions - eliminate programs/reporting, create positions - supporting programs with time and resources and no direct benefit to agency - replicating programs from other agency/ies (reducing redundancy = free time to devote to other programs) -relying on local county to fund majority of budget - hiring individuals who don’t “fit” within community

<p>Ideas to Sow & Grow</p> <p>(Reasons Why in Parentheses)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farmers (no farmers = no food, existing farmers are aging) 2. Utilizing technology (knowledge expansion) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - youtube video training - Wikipedia 3. Educate youth (sustain yourself) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - background of agriculture 4. Develop youth work ethic (better yourself) 	<p>Ideas that Work</p> <p>(Reasons Why in Parentheses)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Club support (specialized) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ex: cheesemaking club would not visit beekeeping “like-minded” souls 2. Specialty crop farming (creates diversity) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mushrooms, blackberries
<p>Ideas to Prune & Plow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is Extension top heavy? - Fundraising - Streamline administrative effort <p><u>Reasons Why:</u></p>	<p>Ideas that Don’t Work</p>

1. too many chiefs and not enough Indians 2. Help bridge monetary gap	
--	--

Ideas to Sow & Grow	Ideas that Work
<p>(Reasons Why in Parentheses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - refocus on agriculture and how to use the food that's grown (new farmers, household health, economy, strength of emerging farmers' markets, diverse agricultural pursuits) - education and technology transfer from NCSU ("one-on-one" relationship built on trust is the best way to share information) - identify individual county's needs - create strong working partnerships with other agencies - education: young farmers, 4-H, more agricultural programs for 4-H - GAP training (farmers market growers need this—<i>consumer driven</i>) 	<p>(Reasons Why in Parentheses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agriculture → youth → home programs (the old model, 1914, has stayed strong) - NCDEA and Extension a good resource network—partnerships (strengthens program areas and information) - agent being embedded in the county, building <i>trust</i> and <i>relationship</i>, is a source of true objectivity. This can't be done all electronically - Extension needs to redefine and reintroduce themselves to the counties to let them know <i>all</i> that they do
Ideas to Prune & Plow	Ideas that Don't Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify and eliminate duplication of services, i.e. local health departments do health education - assess what is <i>not</i> a strong program in a county and put it where it would work <p><u>Reasons Why:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there is some duplication of services between agencies - communicate regarding funding with partners - collaboration to fill gaps in service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - removing the "one-on-one" doesn't work - relying solely on technology with farmers does not work - technology overload - being "all things to all people" has stretched Extension thin <p><u>Reasons Why:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the human to human connected is needed, essential - dilutes availability of specific info.

Ideas to Sow & Grow	Ideas that Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - livestock agent - 4-H youth education - grants officer—identify opportunities - tax exemptions - food safety (realistic) - need-based - economic development <p><u>Reasons Why:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - transfer research - growing farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - base programs on local needs and issues - choose appropriate program consolidation as fit for county - train staff in areas where they are strongest - build on strengths <p><u>Reasons Why:</u></p> <p>Regional agents have proven to be effective</p>
Ideas to Prune & Plow	Ideas that Don't Work
<p>Politicians modify position allocations/absorb cuts</p> <p><u>Reasons Why:</u></p> <p>remove decision based on retirement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One size fits all - Do more with less - All things to all people - Entitlements

Ideas to Sow & Grow	Ideas that Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local foods: small producers, large producers, veg. production, fruit and berry, livestock and tailgates, community gardens - Master Gardner program - cultivate new partnerships - better educate state and federal legislators/county officials on Extension’s work, i.e. farm/city days, report to the people *- produce high quality public service spots on Cooperative Extension for statewide tv and radio marketing effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - horn of plenty participation - 4-H youth development *- some focus on agriculture *- one-one-one relationships *- build better name recognition and associate name to agriculture and 4-H—I spend several minutes explaining my job position and what I do after introducing myself (what is Cooperative?) - research-based information
Ideas to Prune & Plow	Ideas that Don’t Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - agribility - reporting 	

Ideas to Sow & Grow	Ideas that Work
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. sustainable agriculture 2. educational programs for wholistic lifeskills for children/youth/young parents, i.e. financial educations, “4-H” <p><u>Reasons Why:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grow food - medicinal herbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master Gardening workshops - Seed Exchange - working with other programs/organizations - networking resources
Ideas to Prune & Plow	Ideas that Don’t Work
<p>Politicians and their paychecks</p>	<p>Decision-making from city-based offices</p> <p><u>Reasons Why:</u></p> <p>Need to have people tour Extension offices</p>



HEADLINES

We want you to envision a hugely successful partnership between Extension and you and your community. Imagine it is 20 years from now, and someone is writing an article about Extension. What is the headline of that story?

[Headline]

1. Cooperative extension trains volunteer tutors to teach/lead Study circles on life skills for youth and adults
2. Gradual reduction is extension staff accomplished by local county cooperation

[Headline]

1. Agricultural education

Other Comments: In the end an education doesn't cost money, it creates wealth. So many of the people dealing with the extension service are leaving things to help make a living. This puts money back into local economies, and tax dollars back to the government.

Report of the Best Health Ever

1. Healthy children, adults and youth has been reported due to sustainable agriculture, education of children, and youth due to extension education last 150 years.

N.C. Extension Office Combines With it's Communities

1. N.C. Ext has become more effective and popular by using the resource of its communities' centers, farmers and ranchers.

We Continue to Sustain Our Communities

1. From birth to grave Agriculture -Extension Teaches the skills in between

Agriculture Extension with the Help of County Agents Still Going Strong!

1. 4-H grows citizens of character
2. Community development is still the root of our counties
3. Agriculture Agents teach communities how to survive and be sustainable

[Headline]

1. Cooperative Extension Feeds America/World
2. Cooperative Extension Creates Future leaders of America
3. Cooperative Extension: Pioneers of Aging Issues After Babyboomers

[Headline]

1. America feeds itself and has extra for others
2. Don't need imported foods
3. Farms are everywhere

[Headline]

1. Haywood County Commissioner, Kelly, credits 4-H Dairy Club with teaching skills important to her success

[Headline]

1. NC youth choosing farming
2. Jackson County self-sufficient in food production

McDonalds Closes Its Doors

1. Local farmers are supporting our grocery stores
2. Obesity is at all time low, in 20 years

3. Organic, clean living is a way of life

Other Comments: Education is the key!
 Food education

Agriculture is Good

1. Agriculture continues to grow because of services provided by Extension and Partnering Agency.
2. Desire of incoming freshman to major in Agriculture raises considerably due to demand of Ag.
3. Less big box grocery stores more community produce utilized

[Headline]

1. Swain Extension continues to cultivate farmers for new direction/demands across state-Nation!
2. Agriculture in Western North Carolina- a force to be reckoned with!
3. Early mores to changes to Extension leads back to original grassroots mission

[Headline]

1. Co-Op Extension Youth Program responsible for doubling the number of farmers in Macon County
2. Co-Op release new series of online education programs

Extension Exceeds Expectations

1. Because we grew our youth to be good stewards
2. We grew farmers by introducing agriculture at an early age
3. We educated people by using technology

NC Cooperative Extension

1. Supplies state with food during drought
2. Teaches self reliance during economic downturn

Agricultural Extension Service Makes America Free and Independent

1. Extension helps rebuild America by making the American citizen "self-reliant" and independent
2. Extension helps America remain "free"
3. Agricultural Extension Service gives the American citizen the education to become healthier

NC Agriculture brings state out of financial straits

1. Cooperative Extension paves the way with new Agricultural ideas
2. Agriculture research leads to breaking the cycle of poverty

Other Comments:

- Evaluate programs- eliminate programs other agency are doing
- Return to Roots- see 1914 model
- Reduce amount of money that goes to facility- more money to programs
- 4-H- strengthen program- Grow Young Farmers
- One size does not fit all

Farming a New Generation

1. Over 500,000 new farmers in 5 years
2. An agriculture crisis averted
3. A tribute to a redirection of Agriculture Agencies.

Other Comments: New farmers are critical.

[Headline]

1. Healthier people
2. New generations of farmers
3. Extension is not an option it's a necessity

[Headline]

1. World Hunger Eliminated
2. Kudzu-Less

(2050)

Agriculture Industry Gaining on Food Projection Needs Due to Extension Programming

NC Extension leads research and education efforts to meet global food production needs!

Cooperative Extension Continues to Deliver Research Based Information

N.C. Agricultural Ranked Number 1

1. N.C. leader of the nation in young farmers
2. Farm income up for 20th straight year

Another Banner Year in Agriculture

1. Average yield up 17%
2. World hunger down 8%

Celebration of Franklin: Macon County Farmers Market Expansion

1. Due to support of small agricultural projects by local extension agents 20 new vendor spaces have been added to accommodate new farmers.
2. Family and consumer science agents will be available to do demonstrations on food preservation.
3. Scholarship information will be available for 4-H projects.