



## 2020-2023 Strategic Directions for ECOP and the Cooperative Extension System

### OVERVIEW

The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) serves as the executive board and representative body of the Cooperative Extension System (CES). In its work, ECOP seeks to represent, honor, and value the diversity of its membership<sup>1</sup> and move Extension forward together as an inclusive national system. This document builds off ECOP core documents and serves as an aspirational frame for ECOP's mission, required activities, and strategic priorities for 2020-2023. It also recommends a process to ensure that ECOP (a) is accountable to its membership, (b) effectively applies limited human and monetary resources, and (c) is responsive to shifting political and community climates.

This Strategic Directions document is informed by the following documents, which are available upon request.

- ECOP's structural documents including the [BAA Rules of Operation](#), [CES Rules of Operation](#), and [ECOP Operating Guidelines](#);
- The 2020 ECOP Strategic Directions Survey, which was open to all 1890, 1862, and 1994 institutions;
- The [2017 ECOP Chicago Workshop Summary](#), which is the product of an ECOP member workshop in Chicago. The document laid out 3-year strategic goals for 2017-2019 and structural recommendations for ECOP's effectiveness;
- ECOP's motion following delivery of the 2019 Extension Resource Partnership Development Committee final report and recommendations; and
- The 2020 ECOP Ongoing Priorities and Emphasis Areas document, also known as the 2020 ECOP Action Plan under Chair Mark Latimore, Jr.

### ECOP'S MISSION

ECOP's mission and values are presented in the non-binding set of [Operating Guidelines](#) last updated August 13, 2020. Per this document, the mission of ECOP is to strengthen Cooperative Extension at national, state and local levels. To accomplish this mission, ECOP will:

- Develop policy and administrative guidance that facilitates the advancement of the CES;
- Engage CES and the public as partners to reflect the identified priorities of the people we serve;
- Actively communicate policy, functions, and actions of the CES;
- Collaborate and communicate with external groups important to the CES mission;
- Implement efficient and effective mechanisms to address CES needs;
- Initiate strategic planning, scenario building, and future-centered activities to anticipate needs, opportunities, and options for the CES;
- Support a mechanism by which members collaborate in program identification, development, and delivery for access to audiences anytime and anywhere; and
- Identify opportunities and coordinate efforts to expand resources available to the CES.

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<sup>1</sup> ECOP Representatives are those individuals who represent their regions on ECOP as a deliberative body. ECOP's membership is considered to be the Extension Directors and Administrators of all 1862 and 1890, dues paying, Cooperative Extension Services also known as the Cooperative Extension Section of the APLU. When ECOP alone is referenced it refers to the deliberative body.

## **ECOP'S VALUE TO MEMBERS**

The 2020 ECOP Strategic Directions Survey asked all Extension Directors and Administrators to indicate what they value most about ECOP. In summary, members found value in ECOP providing them:

- A national level platform for advocacy and representation.
- A system-wide network that offers opportunities for sharing effective programs, supporting collaborations, and facilitating cooperative approaches to addressing national priority issues.
- Consistent communication to members regarding national issues.
- Networking and professional development opportunities to its members.

A review of the 2017 ECOP Workshop provides a historic perspective to the question of ECOP's value. At that time, ECOP members shared how they saw ECOP bringing value to them and their programs. A number of those listed values align with the survey results above. Additional items from the 2017 Workshop include:

- Creating and implementing a strategic agenda that prioritizes Extension's needs and delivers value added initiatives;
- Shaping and building the future of Extension by creating a big vision;
- Creating new partnerships and funding opportunities;
- Bringing a broader perspective and opinions to the Extension System; and,
- Ensuring a collective impact and mechanism for national recommendations.

## **ECOP's STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2020-2023**

ECOP is committed to effectiveness, transparency, and organizational excellence. As such, the organization has utilized the results of the 2020 Strategic Directions Survey, lessons from the most recent three-year plan ([2017 ECOP Chicago Workshop Summary](#)), comments on the value members derive from ECOP, and ECOP's own guiding documents to inform the following 2020-2023 Strategic Directions:

- 1) Increase visibility and recognition of the Cooperative Extension System as a provider of evidence-based education and services and as a valuable partner to federal and national non-federal entities through improved communications of program impacts and successes.
- 2) Support the professional success of Extension leadership through tailored professional development opportunities including training, webinars, in person meetings, networking opportunities and more.
- 3) Expand federal and non-federal resources available to Extension.
- 4) Identify ongoing and emerging CES priorities and national issues and provide mechanisms for collective action.

This strategic Directions represents ECOP's organizational goals and frame the services it will provide for the next three years (2020-2023). Each ECOP Chair will be responsible for creating and sharing an Annual Action Plan to advance the Directions above. Those plans will include activities that will be undertaken that year or as part of a multi-year initiative.

Annual Action Plans will also ensure that ECOP meets those responsibilities that are mandated in the binding [Rules of Operation for the Cooperative Extension Section](#), last amended October 3, 2018. As such, ECOP will:

- 1) “Represent the Directors and Administrators of member Extension organizations in their collective dealings with other units of CFERR, the APLU, federal agencies, organizations, and the public”;
- 2) “...in coordination with NIFA/USDA, [ECOP will] initiate strategic planning and identify nationwide issues that lead to program and budget priorities”.
- 3) “...represent[s] the states, 1890s, and territories in legislative matters before Congress”;
- 4) “...develop[s] and maintains linkages and supportive relationships with other national organizations and associations”.

## PROCESS

This annual process is established to maintain accountability, consistency, and clear communication to and from ECOP to the Cooperative Extension System:

- 1) ECOP’s incoming Chair will, in conversation with their regional Executive Director or Administrator and the ECOP Executive Director, draft an Annual Action Plan to be reviewed and approved by ECOP. This annual plan shall be reviewed and approved by ECOP and shared with the Cooperative Extension Section ahead the annual National Extension Directors and Administrators conference (NEDA).
- 2) ECOP standing and ad hoc Committees will be reviewed for relevance and effectiveness annually. Each committee is expected to have a set of three-year goals and will create annual action plans to include emerging and legacy issues to which they will report. The submission of a new plan and the annual review will take place during an ECOP meeting associated with NEDA.
- 3) ECOP will submit an annual report of accomplishments, linked to the annual action plan, to the Cooperative Extension Section annually at NEDA.
- 4) In 2024 ECOP will complete a review of the 2020-2023 Strategic Directions and reaffirm and/or set new Strategic Directions for 2024-2027. This review will include consideration of achievements, attempts and shortfalls, as well as new needs of the Cooperative Extension System.