



2024 – 2026 Strategic Directions for ECOP and the Cooperative Extension System

SUMMARY

ECOP's Strategic Directions for 2024-2026 are to:

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

The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) serves as the executive board and representative body of the CES. In its work, ECOP seeks to represent, honor, and value the diversity of its membership and move Extension forward as an inclusive national system. This document serves as an aspirational frame for ECOP's mission, required activities, and strategic priorities for 2024 – 2026. 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.

HISTORY

ECOP's first Strategic Directions were developed in 2021 and were informed by numerous foundational documents, system-wide surveys, conversations at the regional level, and input from ECOP members. These Directions build on the success of the last three years and were developed with input from all CES member institutions at the regional and national level.

ECOP'S MISSION

ECOP's mission and values are presented in its [Operating Guidelines](#). ECOP's mission 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 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 anyplace.

- Identify opportunities and coordinate efforts to expand resources available to the CES.

ECOP'S VALUE¹ TO MEMBERS

ECOP strives to effectively serve each of its 76 member institutions by:

- Providing a national level platform for advocacy and representation.
- Maintaining a system-wide network that offers opportunities for sharing effective programs, supporting collaborations, and facilitating cooperative approaches to addressing national priority issues.
- Disseminating consistent communication to members regarding national issues.
- Delivering networking and professional development opportunities to its members.
- 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.
- Ensuring a collective impact and mechanism for national recommendations.

ECOP's STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2024-2026

ECOP is committed to effectiveness, transparency, and organizational excellence. As such, the organization's Strategic Directions for 2024-2026 are to:

- 1) Increase the visibility and recognition of the CES as a provider of evidence-based education and services. Demonstrate the value CES has as a valuable partner to federal agencies/departments and to non-federal entities from the local to the national level.
- 2) Support the professional success of CES leadership through tailored professional development opportunities including training, webinars, in person meetings, and networking opportunities.
- 3) Expand the diversity and value of federal and non-federal resources available to the CES.
- 4) Identify ongoing and emerging CES priorities and national issues. Provide mechanisms for collective action to address those priorities and issues.
- 5) In support of Directions 1-4, identify priority issue areas and impacts that will empower ECOP to demonstrate the impact of CES at the national level. Develop a methodology for collecting relevant collective impact indicators. Empower robust connections between CES, the agricultural research stations, and other relevant BAA sections in support of our common goals.

¹ These values were identified through the 2020 strategic directions membership-wide survey and the 2017 ECOP strategic workshop.

Annual Action Plans will also ensure that ECOP meets its responsibilities mandated in the binding [Rules of Operation for the Cooperative Extension Section](#). 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”.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

These Strategic Directions will be implemented through a transparent annual process designed to maintain accountability, consistency, and clear communication to and from ECOP to the CES.

- 1) Each ECOP Chair will create and share an Annual Action Plan to advance the Directions above. Annual Action Plans will include specific activities that will be taken and their desired outcomes. Each plan will be reviewed and approved by ECOP and shared with the Cooperative Extension Section (Section) ahead of the annual National Extension Directors and Administrators (NEDA) meeting.
- 2) Each standing or ad hoc committee will maintain a written set of three-year goals and annual action plans on which they will report to ECOP. These action plans, and the overarching relevance and effectiveness of the committee, shall be reviewed by ECOP annually during its business meeting associated with NEDA. Committees that do not make progress on their annual action plans or are no longer relevant to the CES will be sunset.
- 3) ECOP will submit an annual report of accomplishments, linked to the previous year’s annual action plan, to the CES annually at NEDA.
- 4) In 2026, ECOP will complete a review of these Strategic Directions and reaffirm and/or set new Strategic Directions for the subsequent three years. This review will include consideration of achievements, attempts and shortfalls, as well as new needs of the Cooperative Extension System.
- 5) A new set of Strategic Directions, 2027-2029 will be presented to CES during the 2026 NEDA for consideration and approval by the CES.

Approved by ECOP on July 19, 2023

Presented to the Section on October 11, 2023, during the Annual Cooperative Extension Section Business Meeting