2021-2022 Extension Committee on Organization and Policy Action Plan

Wendy Powers, University of California, Chair

As Chair, my goal is to advance ECOP Strategic Directions, focusing on priorities, as identified by member institutions, and building on successes and lessons learned during the recent past. The intended outcome is a cohesive Cooperative Extension System and stronger member programs, inclusive of all.

ECOP’s 2020-2023 Strategic Directions are:

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.

During the 2021-2022 year, these Strategic Directions will be prioritized and advanced through the following Action Plan.

EMPHASIS AREAS and ACTION STEPS

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.

1. Provide existing Cooperative Extension supporters, such as NIFA, USDA, and other aligned national advocacy groups with strong impact messaging and evidence.
   - Provide evidence to NIFA leadership, program liaisons, and other key personnel of Extension’s role in providing value to their investments – leveraging of research and engagement initiatives of LGUs.
   - Engage with NIFA, and especially the new employees, to increase their ability to advocate for capacity-style funding and positioning Extension as central to integrated AFRI funding opportunities.
2. Increase understanding and valuation of the Cooperative Extension System amongst staffers and members in Congressional committee and home offices.

- Create and disseminate resources, talking points, and guidance in support of Extension leaders and advocates carrying the message of Extension’s importance to congressional offices in Washington and in their home districts.
- Engage regularly and intentionally with elected officials, appointees, and staffers.

3. Develop new partners to tell our story.

- Encourage ECOP Program Action Teams to include multiple non-Extension partners in planning conversations, to increase awareness of CES and build new advocates for CES success.

**Expand federal and non-federal resources available to Extension.**

1. Promote year-round advocacy strategies and strengthen a Unified Ask to increase NIFA capacity funding (Smith-Lever and 1890s Extension).

- Engage ECOP and APLU partners, including ESCOP, to implement the APLU advocacy schedule throughout the budget and regulatory cycle.
- Enlist and support Extension professionals (PILD attendees) and supporters (ECOP Budget and Legislative Committee, CARET, ECOP 4-H Leadership Committee, and the BLC’s 4-H Advocacy Sub-Committee) to carry forward the value of Extension by equipping them with advocacy materials.

2. Strengthen and expand partnerships with non-NIFA federal entities and private funding entities by co-creating a roadmap to advance initiatives.

- Continue current initiatives on private funding partnerships and those with non-NIFA federal agencies.
- Intentionally seek collaborations and partnerships to increase programming with underserved communities, including urban programming.
- Conduct regular outreach to key agencies and other prospective partners with intersecting missions including, but not limited to, NRCS, NSF, NOAA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Health & Human Services, and others.
- Through the Program Action Teams leadership, explore partnership potential with federal and non-federal organizations that have intersecting missions and values in the work areas of Nutrition, Health and Wellness, Positive Youth Development, Climate Change, Water and Food Security, Community Resource and Economic Development, Urban Agriculture, and Workforce Development.

3. Maintain a strong working relationship with ESCOP and appropriate ECOP committees to capture opportunities for collaboration and elevate the importance of Extension in LGU research enterprises.

**Identify ongoing and emerging CES priorities and national issues and provide mechanisms for collective action.**
1. Further advance the structure and support for deliberative, forward-looking, result-oriented actions from ECOP committees.
   - Develop a strategy to deploy reserve funding to support ECOP Committees in advancing System success.

2. Develop processes to bring forward new priorities and sunset developed topics.

3. Work with ECOP committees to ensure the Cooperative Extension System addresses nationally relevant issues through a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion lens that reflects rural, urban, and suburban needs.

**Support the professional success of Extension leadership through tailored professional development opportunities including training, webinars, in person meetings, networking opportunities and more.**

1. Provide opportunities for Extension Directors/Administrators to learn from each other and think, collectively, how to position the System for future success. This includes but is not limited to an annual conference (NEDA) and periodic Learning for Leaders events.
   - Evaluate current opportunities and address gaps with special focus on sharing success stories and best practices for sharing those stories with external audiences.
     i. Emphasize advancement towards a multicultural organization.

2. Continue to develop and improve upon the understanding about the role of ECOP and ECOP activities.
   - Provide regular updates on ECOP activities, through the ECOP Monday Minute and virtual Section briefings.

3. Support the administration of ECOP awards that recognize excellence in Extension and a commitment to diversity, pluralism, and innovation in programs that impact Extension audiences.