Ohio Urban Counties
OSU Extension Case Study Research

Strengthening Cities and Urban-Rural Connections, Strengthens Ohio

Guidebook

2021

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Contact

The Ohio Urban Counties Extension Case Study is conducted on behalf of Ohio State University Extension. The case studies are led by Dr. Julie Fox, OSU Extension Director of Strategic Initiatives and Urban Engagement; with support from Michelle Gaston, Program Coordinator; DaVonti' Haynes, Graduate Associate; and Amelia Michaels, student assistant.

Inclusion/Accessibility

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect human diversity and to improve opportunities for all. OSU's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) and its academic and research departments including Ohio State University Extension embrace human diversity and are committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with U.S. civil rights laws and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Case Study Guidebook Table of Contents

I. Case Study Introduction

A. Purpose

Case studies allow researchers to investigate contemporary complex phenomenon within real-life context (Creswell, 2016; Yin, 2011) and are often used in organizational (Hartley, 1994) and social science research (Yin, 2003).

The case study will explore Ohio State University Extension in Ohio's largest counties to provide insight into the current situation and explore anticipated plans for the future. Strengthening cities and urban-rural connections, strengthens Ohio.

This case study research aims to help the OSU Extension leadership team better understand:
- the real-life context of OSU Extension in Ohio's most populated counties,
- how OSU Extension can align with the National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL, 2015) framework and implementation plan, and
- opportunities to further advance how OSU Extension addresses Ohio urban influence and urban-suburban-rural interdependencies in ways that result in Extension being relevant locally, responsive statewide, and recognized nationally.

Other objectives include gaining a fresh perspective through the eyes of an undergraduate and graduate student and relationship building with county personnel.

B. Context

Ohio's Distinct Urban Influence

With 11.7 million residents, Ohio is the seventh most populous state in the nation. More than 50% of Ohio residents live in 10 of the 88 counties. Ohio has six cities with populations of more than 100,000. Only 12 other states have more cities of this size.

Strengthening Connections Along the Urban-Rural Continuum, Strengthens Ohio

With a presence in all Ohio communities, OSU Extension continues to advance engagement with rural, suburban, and urban Ohioans. Shifts in demographic characteristics and community conditions requires unique strategies to bring people and ideas together in ways that are relevant locally, responsive statewide, and recognized nationally. As a Land-Grant, Urban Serving, Carnegie Engaged University, Ohio State addresses Ohio's urban influence and connections along the urban-rural continuum.

OSU Extension addresses Ohio's urban influence and the unique aspects of Extension in and around Ohio's largest cities. The following are essential elements.

• Positioning: Extension's engagement in relevant communications and locations for Extension at the neighborhood, city, county, and regional levels.

• Programs: How Extension leads, collaborates, and innovates to addresses the multitude of issues and priorities in the city.

• Personnel: How Extension attracts, develops, retains, and structures competent talent that reflects the diversity of audiences and issues in the city.

• Partnerships: Extension's collaboration to leverage resources for collective impact.

	Positioning Place, Presence, Marketing, Communications	**Programs** People, Products, Events & Impacts	**Personnel** Attract, Hire, Develop, Retain (Types)	**Partnerships** Funding and other Resources
Why	Awareness Accessibility	Relevance Impact	Capacity Alignment	Connection Resources
Relevant Locally				
Responsive Statewide				
Recognized Nationally				

C. Research Team

The research team is led by Dr. Julie Fox, with support from Michelle Gaston, DaVonti' Haynes, and Amelia Michaels, all with Ohio State University Extension.

As project leader, Fox established protocol and prepared the team for case study research, made initial personal contact with the area leaders and provided background for the OSU Extension's leadership team. As project coordinator, Gaston managed logistics during the entire process and provided baseline data. Graduate student, Haynes, and undergraduate student Michaels explored and identified relevant documentation related to the interview outline. They conducted on-site interviews and observation with the Extension area leader (and other personnel area leaders they may include). Several members of Ohio State Extension's Learning and Organizational Development team assisted with data input and analysis. All team members reviewed and discussed data from documents, observations, and interviews. All members published and shared findings through a final report, OSU Extension events, and a journal article submission.

D. Timeline

In fall 2019, an invitation was sent to the Extension area leaders of the six most populous counties and a location-based Extension operation. In-person interviews were scheduled with those personnel for December 2019-January 2020. A case study guidebook and standard interview questions were developed. Following the interviews, data was collected from the interviews was loaded into NVivo and a qualitative analysis determined themes. Themes were shared at the OSU Extension in Urban Communities Summit held on January 29, 2020. Post Summit a steering council formed to begin developing a Plan of Work. In June/July 2020 interviewers checked in with interviewees to confirm and clarify themes. Meetings in the fall of 2020 involving the counties and steering council were held to inform strategy for the Plan of Work. An article about the case study was submitted in January 2021.

II. Case Study Methods

For this multiple case study qualitative research project, investigators met prior to initial contacts to cover the project objectives, case study background, pre-specified field procedures, and expectations for sharing research findings. While the situation in each county presents a unique perspective on OSU Extension in an urban community, the guide for the project outlined consistent content on the positioning, programs, personnel, and partnerships. Sources of data for this qualitative research included current documents, observations, and interviews.

A. Case Selection

Ohio's six largest counties were selected for interviews with OSU Extension area leaders and any other personnel they designated to include in the interview process. Two-hour in-person interviews were scheduled for December 2019-January 2020 (see communication example in Appendix). Supplemental interviews with personnel in Ohio's largest counties were held during the OSU Extension Annual Conference to further the analysis process. An open invitation was made one week in advance of the conference for anyone wanting to help inform OSU Extension's positioning, programs, personnel, and partnerships in urban counties.

B. Data Collection

A semi-structured interview guide (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was used to collect data. All interviewees were informed that the interview conversations are confidential, and their responses would be de-identified in the final analysis and report.

Outline to guide case study interviews, observations, and document review.
Interview questions were divided into the categories of positioning, programs, personnel, and partnerships. The following questions were used in the interviews.

Positioning: How Extension is positioned at the local level.
Awareness and Accessibility
- Tell us a little bit about the location of your office. What are some advantages and disadvantages of its location? Where else does Extension have a presence in the county?
- What is your elevator pitch about OSU Extension in your city?
- What challenges are you facing in marketing in such a large county?
- What are some things you have done in the past few years that have made progress? What are some best practices that work for your county?
- What state-level support is used for marketing and communications and for real estate and place-based contracts/MOUs?
- What marketing and communications plan is in place? How do you promote programs? How do you reach new audiences?
- Looking Ahead – Are there positioning opportunities you have identified?

Programs: How Extension addresses the multitude of issues and priorities in the city.
Relevance and Impact
- From a preliminary review of documents, it looks like you are doing ___ programs (focused and multi-disciplinary), tell us more about them and why you do these programs.
- What types of audiences are reached?
- How does the diversity of clientele reflect the community profile?
- How are issues and priorities for programming identified?

(community needs/asset process, rapid response to community need?)
- What state-level support is used for programming and issue/priority identification?
- How are campus partners and state specialists involved in programming?
- What state-level support is utilized for campus connections?
- What other resources are involved in programming?
- How are impacts measured and reported?
- What are unique urban considerations in your programming?
- What are programming best practice/s?

Personnel: How Extension attracts, develops, retains, and structures competent talent.
Capacity and Alignment
- From our initial review of your list of county personnel – tell us more about your team (types of positions? longevity? diversity reflecting the community?)
- How do you build capacity through volunteers, consultants, students – interns, work study, capstone, etc.?
- What competencies are needed for Extension professionals working in your large county?
- What type of state-level support is needed for recruiting, developing, and retaining personnel?
- What is the professional development expectation for staff?
- What are the uniquely urban personnel challenges?
- What are the personnel best practices that are uniquely urban?
- Share an overview of your county's volunteers.
- Does the diversity of volunteers reflect the community? What are trends?
- What state-level support is used for stewardship assistance?

Partnerships: How Extension collaborates to leverage resources for collective impact.
Connection and Reach
- Describe the support you receive from groups and influencers:
  - County commissioners/executives
  - City agencies
  - School partnerships
  - Not-for-profit organizations
  - Foundations/philanthropy
  - Other urban-serving universities
  - Neighborhood groups
  - Media
- How are partnership initiated, managed, and sustained?
- How is Extension represented with key community events, orgs, publications, etc.?
- What state-level support is utilized for advancement, government affairs, advisory committees, partnerships?
- What partnership challenges are uniquely urban?
- What partnership best practices are uniquely urban?

In Closing
- I wish …
- I wonder how …
- Our biggest struggle is …
- Our biggest win is …
- Our county is unique because …
- How do you use technology to improve your presence in the community?
  - Programming?
- We address the urban-suburban-rural interface in the county by …
- I need Extension leadership to know …

Interviews

Interviews of individuals or groups allow researchers to attain rich information (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). With the template as a guide, case contributors who are not self-reporting will conduct guided interviews with program leaders and/or other key informants in individual or group settings. Interview notes will be captured via handwritten notes and/or audio recordings if permitted by the interviewee. All interviewees will be informed that the interview conversations are voluntary and confidential, and their responses would be de-identified in the final analysis and report unless approved with a signed photo release or testimonial.

Observations

Direct observation is a valued technique of qualitative data collection (Morgan et al., 2017). Observing people in their natural environment avoids challenges inherent in self-reported accounts (Mays & Pope, 1995). When possible, case contributors will include observation of onsite and/or online programming and program management, using the outline to note interaction among personnel, clients, and partners as related to urban context and strategy.

Observations included the OSU Extension office/s location, signage, accessibility, proximity to clients and partners, and interaction among personnel and clients.

Document Review

Document review results in information and insight into urban Extension practice. Utilizing document review in conjunction with other methods to triangulate data can result in evidence-based best practices (Bretschneider et al., 2017) which reduces the risk of bias and increases understanding from different perspectives.

Prior to the visits, resources were compiled and reviewed by the interview team to learn about each county identified for interviews. The documents were sent to the counties to review and add to if appropriate. Examples are included in the Appendix.

- A one-page context document was compiled with information categories including a brief Extension overview, demographics, geography, complexity, expressed needs/priorities, trends, forecasts, what makes the city unique, city and Extension history investments and impacts, and what's emerging.
- The Extension overview information originated from HR, annual 4-H report, annual Master Gardener Volunteer report, SNAP-Ed report, and EFNEP report. Primary demographic and geography information was gathered from the Ohio Development Services Agency's county profile reports.
  https://development.ohio.gov/reports/reports_countytrends_map.htm

- A one-page document review file was collected for each county. Websites and links were compiled under the headings of the 4 Ps – Positioning, Programs, Personnel, and Partnerships. Documents were evaluated and organized based on contributions in one or more components of positioning, programs, personnel, and partnerships. Because the intention is to not isolate these perspectives, the researchers considered the relationships connecting them.

C. Analysis

Fox led the analysis team to better understand themes discovered during the interviews. The researchers' approach will be interpretive and analytical, rather than solely descriptive (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). This approach was selected to illuminate contextual aspects of the situation to gather both agreed upon and diverse views (Lauckner et al., 2012).

Data will be analyzed using the constant comparative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) of analysis, assigning, and organizing codes into meaningful concepts. To address dependability, confirmability, and credibility, an audit trail includes coded case notes from multiple reviewers and multiple sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Comparative research has become an established research strategy (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016) in urban studies for deducting conclusions based upon the understanding of commonalities and differences across places (Krehl & Weck, 2020). The approach is to contextualize not generalize insights into the urban perspective (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013).

The coding structure follows the outline included in section IIB of this Guidebook (Data Collection).

III. Case Study Reports

The researchers' approach was interpretive and analytical, rather than solely descriptive (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). This approach was selected to illuminate contextual aspects of the situation to gather both agreed upon and diverse views (Lauckner, Paterson, & Krupa, 2012).

Data was analyzed using the constant comparative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) of analysis, assigning, and organizing codes into meaningful concepts. To address dependability, confirmability, and credibility, an audit trail will include interview audio recordings, memos, coded transcripts, written correspondence, and the use of multiple sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A. Report
An initial report was compiled in preparation for the January 29, 2020 Summit on Extension in Ohio's Urban Communities focused on Ohio's urban influence and urban-rural interdependence.

B. Journal Article
An article was submitted on the case study process to the Journal of Extension in January 2021.

C. Presentations
Findings were shared through presentations shared with OSU Extension personnel and leaders in January – March 2020 with an aim of integrating urban Extension priorities with OSU Extension's strategies and plan of work.

IV. Case Study Appendix

A. Project Communications

Personal conversations and a letter of invitation was emailed by Julie Fox to the area leaders of the six most populous counties in Ohio approximately one month prior to the start of the visits.

Sample Invitation

Hello -

In preparation for the Urban Extension 2020-2025 Summit on January 29, 2020 (more on this to come), we're undertaking a case study to explore urban Extension in Ohio so we can learn more about the current state, plan for the future state, and decide how to navigate the space in between.

We would like to conduct a quick case study of your work in the city.

The top reasons for the case study are:

• To help the Extension Leadership Team better understand the real-life context of your Extension work in urban communities.
• To better understand how OSU Extension can align with the National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) Framework and Implementation Plan.
• To further advance how OSU Extension can be relevant locally, responsive statewide, and recognized nationally.
• To gain a fresh perspective through the eyes of an undergraduate and a graduate student.

The six most populous Ohio counties for the in-person interview portion of the case study include Franklin, Cuyahoga, Hamilton, Summit, Montgomery, and Lucas.

In addition to a document review and compilation of context data, we will be conducting in-person interviews with area leaders and any staff you choose to include. The Urban Engagement unit at this time is fortunate to have graduate associate DaVonti' Haynes and an undergraduate student assistant Amelia Michaels. The students will be conducting the in-person interviews. We plan to hold the interviews November 21, December 2, December 4, and December 12 at your locations.

So, what do you need to know/do?

The interviews will be informal so there should be no pressure. We will send the general discussion outline to you ahead of time so you have time to gather your thoughts, collect some materials, and invite appropriate staff to the interview if you'd like. The visit should last 2-3 hours.

Let us know which date/s work best for you and if you have a time preference. We are happy to provide refreshments, meet over lunch, or do whatever makes it easy for you to participate and share your perspective.

Strengthening cities and urban-rural connections, strengthens Ohio.

-Julie

After area leaders confirmed their interest, Michelle Gaston worked with DaVonti' Haynes and Amelia Michaels to schedule 2-hour visits with each the area leaders at their Extension office. A confirmation letter with details about the visit, an outline of the questions, and resources gathered was sent to each area leader approximately one week before the visit.

Sample Confirmation

Subject: ___ County Urban Extension Case Study

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Ohio Urban Counties OSU Extension Case Study. Our research team of DaVonti' Haynes – graduate associate and Amelia (Amy) Michaels – student assistant is looking forward to meeting with you.

You can expect DaVonti' and Amy on:
[date, time, location]

The case study will explore urban Extension in Ohio so we can learn more about the current state, plan for the future state, and decide how to navigate the space in between. The study will inform the Urban Extension 2020-2025 Summit on January 29 as we learn together that strengthening cities and urban-rural connections, strengthens Ohio.

OSU Extension addresses Ohio's urban influence and the unique aspects of Extension in and around Ohio's largest cities. The following four essential elements will be used to help organize the interview.

• Positioning: Extension's engagement in relevant communications and locations for Extension at the neighborhood, city, county, and regional levels.

• Programs: How Extension leads, collaborates, and innovates to addresses the multitude of issues and priorities in the city.

• Personnel: How Extension attracts, develops, retains, and structures competent talent that reflects the diversity of audiences and issues in the city.

• Partnerships: Extension's collaboration to leverage resources for collective impact.

Context and Resources
In preparation for the interviews, resources have been compiled so the interview team can learn about your county prior to their visit. Attached you will find a context document and a resource document. Feel free to suggest additional material for our review. We do need additional information regarding partnerships you have and any strategic plans that are in place.

In-Person Interview
You are welcome to invite appropriate staff to the interview. We expect the conversation to last about two hours. These conversations are confidential, and your responses will be de-identified in the multiple case study analysis and final report. DaVonti' and Amy may ask for your permission to record the interviews. The recordings to capture your story will only be used internally so the report can be accurately written.

Interview Questions
Attached is the question outline that will be used during the interview. Don't feel overwhelmed as this is a working guide and all questions may not be asked/answered.

Thank you in advance for the time you and your team are committing to this project. If you have questions, please reach out to Michelle Gaston.6@osu.edu (614-292-0546) or Julie Fox.264@osu.edu (740-708-0993).
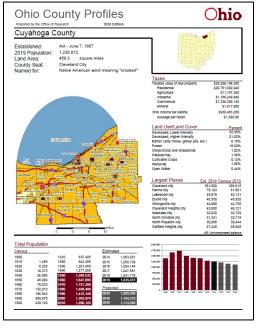
-Michelle

Thank you note:
An email was sent thanking those who spent time talking with the interviewers.

B. Project Documents (most are OSU Box links)

County Context Example

County Document Review Example

County Profile Example

C. References

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