



Urban Extension Professional Development Summit Executive Summary



Extension professionals receive professional development (PD) training through a variety of platforms including their state Extension unit, professional associations (e.g., JCEP), collaborative networks (e.g, eXtension, National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL), Western Center for Metropolitan Extension & Research), professional journals (e.g., Journal of Extension) and other formal and informal learning environments. Despite existing PD opportunities, new and seasoned Extension professional can be challenged in navigating complex urban settings where greater diversity, complexity, density, and scale require contextual perspective and a collection of skills beyond disciplinary expertise.

To explore the PD needs of urban Extension professionals a diverse group of Extension leaders representing differing urban Extension interests recently convened in a one-day gathering to initiate a broader conversation on the topic. The discussion was framed by a staff survey presented at the 2017 National Urban Extension Conference where, among other findings, 80% of Extension staff indicated they lacked urban-specific resources for new staff onboarding, 79% indicated that no system existed for urban staff mentoring, and 66% indicated they lacked clear goals and expectations relative to their engagement with community. Simply put, urban Extension staff and those that represent Extension in urban settings, require additional PD offerings based on relevant competencies if Extension is going to achieve the programmatic reach and impact desired.

After exploring various staff competencies, particularly those identified as critical for success in urban environments, and the rural-urban interface, the group identified a series of next steps that provides a realistic pathway toward achieving a collective urban Extension PD system that triages collective resources and expertise, including:

- pursuing a liaison and/or affiliate status of NUEL with JCEP member organizations to engage in dialogue with committees and association memberships on urban Extension competencies and PD;
- working with eXtension's Impact Collaborative initiative to pursue innovations in urban Extension professional competencies;
- utilizing the Competency Framework Development (CFD), facilitated by eXtension contractor EduWorks, to develop a CFD for a full-time urban Extension program professional and an urban Extension project representative;
- guiding an eXtension Fellow in developing urban Extension competency and PD resources; supporting their work on a Fieldbook
- connecting with JCEP's professional development efforts, including potential certificate programs for Extension competencies and a complimentary urban competency "badge";
- facilitating a Leading Edge system change conversation at the National Urban Extension Conference in May 2019 to explore how to integrate urban Extension competencies into hiring, developing, and recognizing diverse talent;
- exploring a national urban Extension staff mentoring program to encourage peer-to-peer learning;
- continuing to engage Extension Directors and the NUEL Steering Committee, NUEL PD Action Team, and emerging NUEL Regional Caucuses to include diverse representation from each of the ECOP regions in the CFD, PD efforts, and other related projects; and
- integrating urban Extension PD references and resources into the new NUEL website (hosted by eXtension).

Tremendous opportunities exist in furthering Extension's impact in urban communities. Realizing our potential however, requires committing to a robust professional development system that equips administrators, faculty, staff, and other urban Extension representatives with the unique skills necessary for success. The above outlined efforts provide actionable steps toward uniting Extension organizations in addressing PD priorities related to the growing urban influence and urban-suburban-rural interdependencies.