

Urban Extension Introductory Guide

Four of five Americans now live in urban areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). This Urban Extension Introductory Guide provides a brief overview for Extension professionals working at the intersection of Land-Grant Universities (LGU) and urban communities. Focusing on urban is not intended to minimize the important work and impact in our rural and suburban communities, but to better understand the context and strategy relevant in metropolitan areas. The formation of the [National Urban Extension Leaders \(NUEL\)](#) in 2013 and the [urban Extension framework](#) that followed (NUEL, 2015) provided a basis for better understanding the university context, the urban-rural interface, and the urban context of scale (population size and density), diversity, and complexity.

Urban Community Context

Densely populated areas present unique challenges and opportunities for Extension and other community-based organizations. Extension addresses the population shift in the United States and refers to one or more of the following terms for urban, metro, or city Extension.

- [Metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas \(metro and micro areas\)](#) are geographic entities delineated by the [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\)](#) for use by federal statistical agencies in collecting, tabulating, and publishing federal statistics
- [Urban Influence Codes](#) form a classification scheme that distinguishes metropolitan counties by population size of their metro area, and non-metropolitan counties by size of the largest city or town and proximity to metro and micropolitan areas.
- [The Census Bureau's urban-rural classification](#) is fundamentally a delineation of geographical areas, identifying both individual urban areas and the rural areas of the nation.

Agencies and organizations may also have specific guidelines defining urbanized areas, large cities, and regions, but the common essence is the densely populated geographic area. Due to the scale, diversity, and complexity of large metropolitan areas, Extension's work is similar and different when compared with Extension professionals working in rural and suburban areas. Urban Extension professionals engage through dynamic interrelated networks, with both familiar and additional partners.

Urban Community Context

Intersection of Land Grant Universities and Urban Communities

Familiar Partners

Cooperative Agreement

Federal, State, Local Government & Land Grant Universities

In Cooperation with Other Community Organizations

Education, Business, Nonprofit, Philanthropic, Faith-based communities, Media & Entertainment

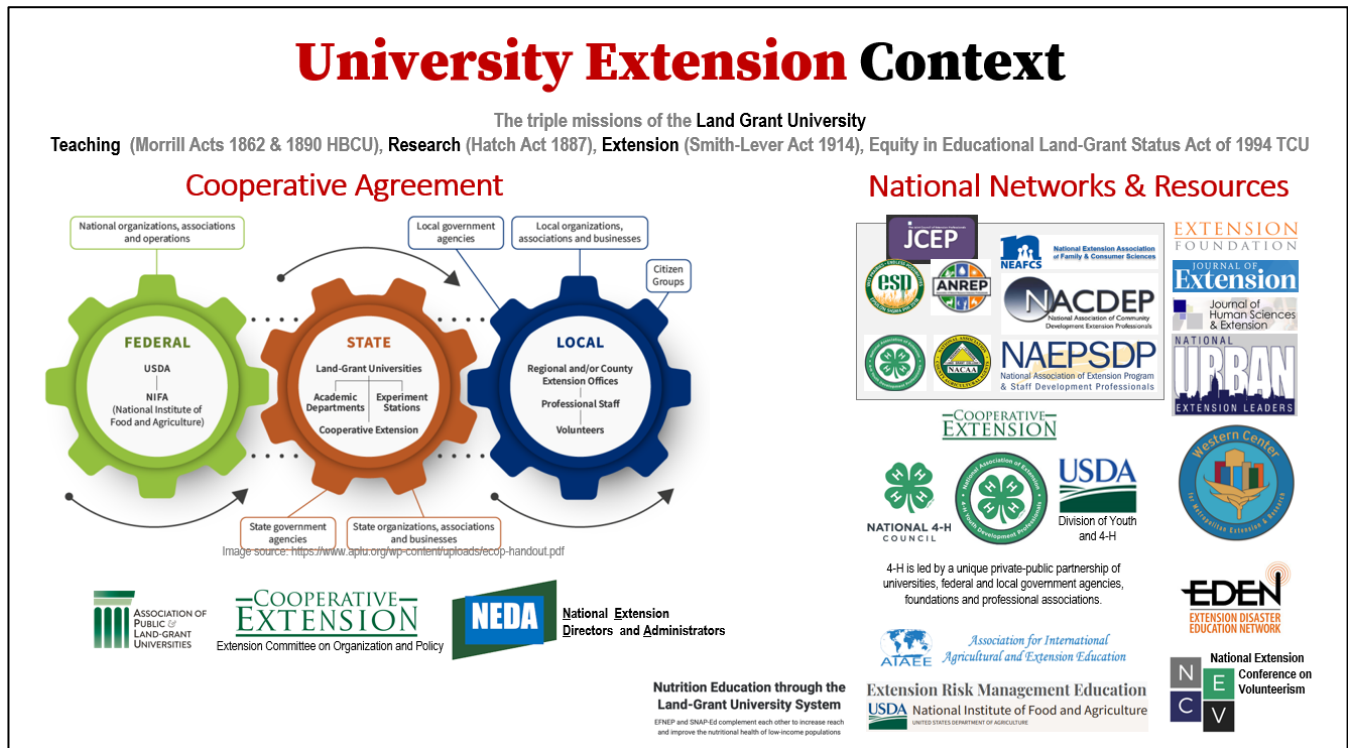
Additional Perspectives and Partners

University Extension Context

Extension is the Land-Grant University's community-based catalyst for co-discovery and community engagement. Extension engages in work that is sometimes similar to agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector, however, the focus is unique because of the triple mission of Land-Grant Universities.

- Teaching and Learning
- Research and Innovation
- Extension and other community engagement

With federal, state, and local support, Extension professionals work collaboratively with university colleagues and local partners on community priorities – leveraging the resources of vast networks to be relevant locally, responsive statewide, and recognized nationally. With more than a century of advancing human well-being, technology transfer, and community development in more than 100 countries, Extension has addressed contemporary issues with research-based information and respect for local perspectives. In the United States, Extension links research and education with local communities through integrated networks.



*Understanding our context
 makes us more aware of situational factors
 as we make decisions and take actions
 (Bamberger, 2008).*

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q. Is Extension just for agriculture?

A. While food, agriculture, the environment, and natural resources are important aspects of Extension, other dimensions include community development, health, and youth through 4-H youth development. With a community-based approach, Extension reflects local priorities.

Q. Why do cities need Extension when there are so many other resources available?

A. Extension partners with others in the community to bring unique resources available exclusively through the Land-Grant University network – adding to and not replacing or duplicating efforts to address the city’s most pressing issues. Sometimes, Extension takes the lead and other times, Extension contributes to impacts in other meaningful ways.

Q. Where are some examples and best practices of urban Extension?

A. The [Journal of Extension \(JOE\)](#), the [Journal of Human Sciences and Extension \(JHSE\) -2017 and 2022](#), and other [journals](#) document many examples of urban Extension in a variety of impact areas.

Resources for Urban Engagement

Being a part of the city is a privilege for faculty and staff working with Land-Grant and other [metropolitan](#) and [urban serving universities](#). Metropolitan communities are filled with unique opportunities for teaching, research, outreach, and communications. Urban Extension engages multiple people who share the commitment to the quality of life in metropolitan communities, including urban Extension personnel, urban university colleagues, volunteers, advocates, and partners.

To learn more about urban Extension’s history, contemporary context, and networks of resources, visit the [Extension Foundation](#).

References

Bamberger, P. (2008). From the editors beyond contextualization: Using context theories to narrow the micro-macro gap in management research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 51(5), 839-846.

This [guide and related videos](#) are frequently updated based on the perspective of people committed to engagement in urban communities. If you have a suggestion, please share it with [Michelle Gaston](#).

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