

JCEP Blue Ribbon Committee

Issues-Based Survey Recap and Recommendation for the JCEP Board

May 7, 2015

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The JCEP Blue Ribbon Committee recently convened to provide direction to JCEP, ECOP and NIFA to (1) identify emerging issues in Extension nationally; (2) determine the appropriate methods of delivery, training or resources that would improve Extension's responsiveness to these issues; and to (3) suggest partnerships that would necessitate desired results.

Additional to these three charges, the committee was interested to explore what kind of an event ECOP/NIFA be willing to fund and support between live events or conferences, webinars, distance learning, archived information, or another platform? We specifically wanted to know what has qualified as an emerging issue in the last 10 years, and where Extension could have responded more quickly and appropriately. In instances where Extension did not have information available to address emerging issues, we wanted to know what resources Extension accessed.

An electronic survey instrument was created and emailed to membership of all of the associations listed above. The survey was completed by 1,382 respondents from across the country with the majority of respondents identifying themselves as members of ESP, NEA4HA, NEAFCS, and NACAA, however all associations were represented at some level.

To access the full survey results, please find the attached 75 page document attached. Following is a bulleted, short-summary of the survey results that we found most meaningful to report on.

- 1. Best format to use for an Issues-Based Summit? – 2 day face-to-face or in an online format.**
- 2. If held in person, when and where would be best? – Sept/Oct of 2015, North Central/South East/South Central all ranked equally.**
- 3. How much money would people be willing spend to attend (travel, lodging, registration)? - \$500 to 1,000.**
- 4. Which issue-areas have Extension programs been conducted in the last 3 years?** Responses to this question were diverse, with programs touching all program areas in Extension. A clear majority of issue-based programming is occurring in 4-H, involves cross-county programming, and equally covers the areas of Ag, FCS, Community Development, and Training the Trainer. The most popular issues are Local Food and Food Systems, Family and Consumer, Water and Water Conservation, and Community Development. There was lesser, but equal representation among issues like Community Resiliency, Energy, Entrepreneurs, Land Use and more.

5. **Are there other activities that we may have missed?** 188 narrative responses were received covering everything from Literacy to Wicked Problems to Chronic Disease to Obesity Prevention. This list is comprehensive and encapsulates the breadth of work that Extension provides across the country.
6. **Over the last 10 years, what was Extension “late to the table” for?** The majority of responses indicated Local Food/Food Systems/Food Access/Food Deserts, Obesity Prevention, Poverty, Innovations in Youth Development, Urban Ag, Climate Change, Water, Nonprofit Coaching, Environmental Sustainability, Health, Community Resiliency, and Emergency Preparedness. There were an additional 144 narrative responses of topics that were not given as choices. These include issues as diverse as GMOs, Aging, Racism, Abuse and Neglect, Innovation, Cottage Foods, Healthcare Reform, Succession Planning, Technology and many more.
7. **For Emerging Issues that we were late to the table at, or did not participate at an appropriate level, where did people go to get information on how to respond?** – Other universities, contacted campus or Specialists, contacted existing partners, Federal government, State government, created my own delivery system, my professional association, my local County, local nonprofits, social media, media, and even just winging it. An additional 68 narrative responses were provided as well.
8. **How could Extension have responded better?** – 68% responded that Extension should have lead a Bottom-Up approach to survey Agents and Program Staff to determine issues early in the process. 60% responded that Extension could have forecast the issue(s) earlier and delivered a strategy for communities to engage around the issue. Only 15% of respondents think that Top Down is an appropriate response. There were an additional 67 narrative responses as well.
9. **How quickly has Extension responded to emerging issues over the last 10 years?** – 48% of respondents said were just little bit late to arrive at the table, and 24% said we are 2-3 years behind on most issues. 19% said we arrived just in time. There are an additional 324 narrative responses providing a font of information and feedback on our ability to respond in a meaningful and appropriate manner.
10. **What tools would be most beneficial to you to gain from in person or online training?** – responses included Convening Community Conversations, Effective Facilitation Techniques, Instant Evaluation, Polarity Management, Audience Polling, Post Event Feedback, Speedback, Wicked Problems and Pre-Event Surveys. An additional 58 narrative responses included ideas like demographic shifts, YouTube, anger management and conflict resolution.
11. **What would provide you the most value in training?** Tools to take back to my community, becoming more nimble, and learning how to identify emerging issues were the top three responses, as well as an additional 56 narrative comments.
12. **Is there anything else you would like us to know?** 127 narrative responses were received including everything from not hosting another Galaxy Conference or conference in general, the summit could be hosted at JCEP in February, think in new and creative ways, thanks for listening, make sure we don’t abandon our traditional and core customers, and much, much more.

The Blue Ribbon Committee discussed the results of the survey in detail and has made the following recommendations for consideration:

“Getting In Front of the 8-Ball”

Timely and appropriate training for Extension’s response to emerging issues

1. Extension Directors around the country identify a team of multi-disciplinary experts around emerging themes. These experts will determine the best time and method for education delivery. In many cases, delivery can be online but in some instances a 2-day conference would be the best method. Topics for the training would be determined based on the results of this survey instrument and continued exploration with Extension staff on an ongoing basis. We could look at conducting an annual issues survey to keep our information current and our radar up to see new issues as they emerge.
2. Create an online format and delivery system to address and train Extension on Emerging Issues nationally. An online format is more nimble, can be archived, and meets the present day Extension Agent’s demanding schedule most appropriately.
3. An online series could be launched in a webinar or connect-type environment, occurring on the same day/time monthly or quarterly.
4. It was suggested that different states or regions or even Associations could be responsible for the individual webinar(s). Each training or webinar would follow a similar template and those responsible would assemble a team of “experts” on a particular issue that is emerging. We imagine some sort of a panel presentation and then a roll-out or practical tools and tips that could be done in communities to address issues.
5. All of the webinars/trainings would be archived and marketed to membership on an ongoing basis.

