

Leadership Roles for Cooperative Extension

Building Partnerships for Strong Communities

Forming partnerships with US EPA can help state Extension administrators address critical environmental management needs and deliver good programs to communities. Extension administrators are ideally positioned to encourage partnerships through positive leadership and administrative support.

Within their own organizations, Extension leaders can actively encourage local, district, state and regional staff to instigate programs and form liaisons. As these staff build and nurture interagency relationships leaders can help them with resources, program support, and mentoring.

Outside their organizations Extension leadership can:

- Advocate Extension’s education mission and its broad base.
- Help identify and support specific strategies for partnership involvement.
- Provide evidence of impacts and results from Extension’s involvement in the partnership.

This pamphlet is for Cooperative Extension leaders at all levels. It introduces the US EPA’s mission, goals, and programming areas and links them to those of Co-op Extension. It also offers action steps and partnership examples.

Partnership Opportunities

Partnerships are responsive, task-oriented relationships. The people involved combine their varied, complementary skills and experiences to solve a defined problem. Partnerships emphasize collaboration, equity, investment, and reciprocity.

The most fertile areas for developing partnerships are those where Extension education priorities coincide with specific US EPA programming areas. In fact, EPA may prefer Extension as a partner for outreach activities. Although EPA’s primary relationship is usually with a state’s regulatory agency, it is reluctant to ask the agency to do more than carry out regulatory requirements.

EPA offices have specific program funds and initiatives (see Programming Areas list). Each program has its own expertise, information and other resources, data, technology, and funding. A specific Extension objective may fit the goals and funding priorities of more than one office.

Locating appropriate funding and resources within EPA can be difficult. However, Extension staff often have the bridge-building experience that makes them effective in finding opportunities and forging collaborative projects.

US EPA Programming Areas

Environmental Topic Offices Each implements specific statutes

- Air and Radiation
- Pesticides, Prevention and Toxic Substances
- Solid Waste and Emergency Response
- Water

Offices operating administrative programs that cross assigned statutes:

- Administration and Resource Management
- Enforcement and Compliance Assistance
- American Indian Environmental Office
- Children’s Health Protection
- Environmental Education
- Environmental Justice
- International Affairs
- Inspector General
- Policy, Planning and Evaluation
- Research and Development

Cooperative projects with EPA have been most successful when designed and funded at the regional level.

Environmental Management

Cooperative Extension and EPA share common community and environmental management goals. Extension's approach is to connect ecosystem management to community development activities.

Extension professionals work with communities to manage the resource more effectively, to make improvements, and to assure that decisions are based on appropriate science. Professionals find or create education resources that will support this community-based environmental management.

EPA has a statutory responsibility to focus on improving the quality of life in communities. Its various initiatives and programs are intended to help achieve this goal. It works extensively with state regulatory agencies but may also become directly involved in community activities.

Recently, EPA's attitude towards local decision-making has changed significantly. Its initiatives work to engage the community (or community of interest) in setting rules and in voluntary compliance. This includes the Community Based Environmental Protection program (CBEP).

Under current policy, EPA works directly with a community when:

- EPA is championing a national policy or violation (air or water violation, endangered species, superfund site).
- A major local environmental or policy issue attracts a lot of attention (empowerment zones, environmental justice, large-scale environmental risk in a community).
- The lead state agency or other resource cannot or will not help.

As new policies and initiatives develop, they may also drive community involvement. Examples include major national initiatives such as brownfields revitalization and estuary protection, and major program focuses such as children's health issues and environmental justice.

Partnership Building Blocks

Partnerships can be initiated at every level of Extension—county to national. They should begin by focusing on EPA's four primary issues: air quality, pollution prevention, solid waste, and water quality.

EPA frequently forms partnerships with industries or businesses whose materials or processes are creating unwanted by-products. Extension can promote a relationship with EPA using this familiar model. Describing itself as a "program sponsor" would highlight Extension's capacity for working with interest groups and communities to provide and apply new information.

Cooperative Extension leaders and professionals at different levels of the organization have different roles in promoting partnerships with EPA.

Directors and Program Leaders can share Extension's vision of partnerships, its mission for education, and its ability to reach into communities in every county. They can also show the impact of Extension's involvement in communities.

Directors can promote partnership efforts and emphasize the need to formalize and stabilize financial support for effective programs.

US EPA Strategic Mission

Protect human health and safeguard the natural environment — air, water and land — upon which life depends.

US EPA Goals

- Clean air
- Clean and safe water
- Safe food
- Preventing pollution and reducing risk in communities, homes, work places, and ecosystems
- Better waste management, restoring contaminated waste sites, and emergency response
- Reducing global and cross-border environmental risks
- Expanding Americans' right to know about their environment
- Sound science, improved understanding of environmental risk, and greater innovation to address environmental problems
- A credible deterrent to pollution with greater compliance with the law
- Effective management (of EPA)

Program Leaders can give specialists the flexible time and program direction needed to make a partnership work.

Extension Specialists are attuned to emerging issues and develop their own expertise in relation to those issues. Specialists often become national leaders on a particular topic. They can actively participate in collaborative activities, such as the Great Lakes Pollution Prevention Roundtable, and can use their skills to bring together EPA, the state lead agency, and others to work on problems of mutual interest.

County Educators can advocate for Extension's role at the table when EPA works in a community to respond to a crisis or implement models for a major national initiative.

Next Steps

To begin a partnership, Extension leaders can contact the head of an EPA program office or the team leader for a specific unit within the office. For example, for help with a wetlands issue, Extension might contact the head of the office of Ecosystems and Communities or the team leader for the wetlands unit.

The names of US EPA offices, divisions, units, and work groups vary from Region to Region. The best way to determine who to contact is to check the EPA web page www.epa.gov, then link to information about the appropriate regional office.

Regional and national partnership work groups can work towards the following partnership goals using the following techniques:

Goal 1: Legitimize Extension/EPA relationships in Washington, DC, and Regions

- Announce the partnership.
- Create EPA/Extension liaison positions at each EPA regional office.
- Explore opportunities for Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and possible funding for mutual planning and management.
- Consider national liaison positions: EPA at the CSREES office, and Extension at EPA's office in Washington, DC

Goal 2: Implement regional task forces in EPA and Extension

- Identify a contact at each Land Grant University who can assist the regional liaison with two-way communication.
- Work to set priorities for issues and the region by working with the EPA/Extension regional liaison, and representatives of each Land Grant University, state lead agency, and EPA administrator.
- Create newsletter and Web links. Share resources and tools on specific topics.
- Use the Performance Partnership Agreement (PPA) to incorporate work with other agencies.

Goal 3: Support professional exchanges between EPA and Extension

Encourage and support professionals in trading positions and staff teams at local, state and federal levels.

Goal 4: Conduct joint in-service training for Extension and EPA professionals

Provide professional development opportunities such as: national or regional meetings on specific topics; training on specific resources, their use and availability; and training based on education commonalities. Potential training links include:

- Estuary, wetlands protection
- Children's environmental health
- Small-scale waste water management, septic systems, mound systems
- Drinking water protection, sources, wells
- Surface water protection
- Environmental compliance by agriculture businesses and farmers
- Industry pollution prevention

Cooperative Extension Strengths

Mission

Extension's community development mission produces opportunities to serve the public and helps to shape project direction. Extension has demonstrated success in enhancing voluntary actions.

Access to clients

Extension's neutral education role gives it access to clients.

Regional accessibility

Successful partnerships depend on effective interpersonal relationships. Extension's strong state-level staffing makes it possible to partner successfully with EPA regional staff.

Expertise

Extension state specialists and county educators have valuable knowledge

and expertise and act as links to other university expertise.

Extension professionals know how to gather and interpret data and resources, can advise on how to implement community-based education, and can offer an outsider's perspective on EPA project strategies.

National-to-local network

Cooperative Extension has its own set of diverse partner networks integrating national, regional, state, and local organizations and interests.

Extension is known for its strengths as a partner and communicator, an organizer and manager, a change agent, and a promoter of results.

Partnership Examples

Some successful partnerships between Extension and EPA are already in place. The examples which follow are at the national or regional level. Many others are operating around the country as local or single-issue partnerships.

EPA/Extension joint appointments Positions focusing mostly on nonpoint-source water pollution issues and water pollution prevention, joint between state extensions and the EPA Region office.

NEMO (Nonpoint Source Education for Municipal Officials) Funding to support multi-state involvement in an Extension outreach initiative.

Western EPA/Extension Rangeland and riparian monitoring; model for training people to deal with nonpoint source pollution.

Pesticide Applicator Training

Collaborates with state Departments of Agriculture.

Indoor Air Quality Two partnerships evolved to develop materials and to conduct training for health and building professionals and for community education.

Pollution Prevention A variety of EPA/Extension partnerships: Farm*A*Syst, Manufacturing Extension, and Compliance Assistance.

Forestry Issues Forester education is provided in cooperation with EPA's nonpoint source program and includes logger training and Best Management Practices activities.

US EPA CBEP program Extension North Central Rural Development Center has formed a new partnership with national US EPA to develop social indicators of environmental protection.

US EPA/Extension Partnership Models

EPA Grants and Contracts

Specific to program, goals, mission, time lines, and product

Legislative Mandate

Example: Pesticide Applicator Training

Liaison/Joint Appointment

Example: EPA Region 10

Interagency Personnel Agreement

Example: EPA liaison to Farm*A*Syst

Cooperative Efforts

Example: national initiative to deliver indoor air education to homes

Cooperative Agreements

Example: to coordinate the delivery of training and services to volunteer monitoring groups

Pilot Programs

Example: to develop social indicators of environmental protection

Prepared by Elaine Andrews and Lynn Entine, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension-Environmental Resources Center. Edited by Lynn Entine. Designed by Nellie Schmitz



Environmental Resources Center, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension, 1450 Linden Dr., 216 Agriculture Hall, Madison, WI 53706
608/262-0020 <<http://www.uwex.edu/erc>>

Produced with funding from the US EPA Office of Environmental Education



The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.