Wisconsin (University of Wisconsin Madison)

Plan of Work for 2023-2027

Status: Final (Approved 9/26/2022)

Executive Summary Overview

The Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station (WAES) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension (Extension) are partners in an effort to generate new research-based knowledge for Wisconsin's residents and communities to help address challenges and reach their goals. The success of our statewide educational efforts is founded on the generation of new, relevant knowledge through peer- reviewed, investigator-driven research supported by capacity grant funding. We seek to allocate these funds in a manner that best addresses the ongoing and emergent needs of our stakeholders.

Priorities are aligned with input from stakeholders with interests in traditional and non-traditional agriculture, energy & natural resources, health equity and well-being, human development and relationships, positive youth development, food accessibility/safety/nutrition, and community development. We receive input from these stakeholders through conversations and correspondences, public meetings such as field days at Agricultural Research Stations, and through other Extension/WAES-facilitated events.

This input informs decisions about the types of research to conduct as well as the design of educational initiatives conducted by Extension/WAES in partnership with local, state, tribal and regional organizations, farmers, consumers, business owners and entrepreneurs, support services, coalitions, decision makers, and public and tribal government agencies.

In addition to ongoing planning and needs assessment efforts, Extension is currently engaging in a strategic planning process (2022 to 2023). This work will result in a Strategic Plan to guide our division over the next five years. The Strategic Plan will: (1) Identify internal partners that need to engage in and understand our strategic direction; (2) Identify current external partners, potential partners, and Tribal Nations that can provide us with their perspective of desired services aligned with our purpose; and (3) Include an implementation plan, including suggested metrics to measure success.

WAES uses Hatch funds to support approximately 110 to 130 projects each year, which are distributed among our 17 departments and the Wisconsin Crop Improvement Center. More importantly, these funds are used to support graduate students. Research focuses on various topics such as: dairy, animal health, crop yield, pesticide management, nutrition, food safety, education for future farmers, water resources, and community development. We continually re-examine our research portfolio in order to address short, intermediate, and long-term issues to ensure that we invest in projects that are relevant to NIFA national goals and focus on current state research needs.

EXTENSION'S capacity-funded programs are organized within and across program Institutes to address issues important to agriculture, businesses, communities, families, and youth across the state. Extension

operates six Institutes that are co- funded through Smith-Lever funding: Agriculture, Community Development, Health and Well-Being, Human Development and Relationships, Natural Resources, and Positive Youth Development. While these Institutes are also partially funded through other sources, Smith-Lever funding provides the fiscal basis for our state-wide research and outreach work. Further, Smith-Lever funding allows us to apply to, and efficiently leverage, additional funding in service of our programmatic priorities.

Within Extension's six Institutes, we operate 21 Extension Programs organized around more specific topics, such as Dairy, Land and Water, Local Government Education, Healthy Eating and Active Living, Financial Security, and Wisconsin 4-H. Additionally, Extension operates the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve and Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center. Through Smith-Lever funding, Extension invests in faculty and staff located in various UW-Madison schools and colleges as well as at UW-Green Bay, UW-Platteville, UW-River Falls, and UW-Stevens Point. Capacity funds are invested in campus and locally-based faculty and staff to provide capacity for growing applied research programs and to develop, deliver, and expand access to educational programs for the people of Wisconsin. Our approach mirrors the integrated research, Extension, and multi-state expectations of USDA NIFA. At the institutional level, we are focusing on outcomes and impact indicators associated with our educational priorities. Specifically, we identify common outcomes at the state level that align with our program planning process and targeted impact.

Merit and Scientific Peer Review Processes

WAES. The merit review process for WAES consists of a combined external and internal university panel. A 12-person faculty Research Advisory Committee (RAC), appointed by the CALS Associate Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station, reviews proposals for capacity grant funding on the UW-Madison campus. Two RAC members (designated primary and secondary reviewers) and by one-non committee members review each proposal. These members, established experts in their fields, are drawn from the Madison campus, other UW campuses, state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other states. The reviewers consider a proposal's scientific merit and relevance to program guidelines, as well as to national goals and emphases areas, pertinence to state problems and priorities, relationship to multistate projects, and inclusion of integrated activity.

EXTENSION activities are determined and reviewed through ongoing assessment of local needs and program planning processes. Extension Programs, composed of affiliates from local educator faculty and staff, regional and state specialists, and campus-based research faculty, develop annual program plans of work. Plans of work describe the specific needs to be addressed, as well as target audiences, strategies for reaching traditionally underserved audiences, intended outcomes, action plans for how to achieve outcomes, and evaluation plans. Program leadership reviews these plans of work that serve as a roadmap for development of individual work plans which guide subsequent programmatic assessments of community impact. Extension curricula and publications are peer reviewed by research and Extension faculty, government or industry colleagues, and professionals as appropriate to the content, purpose, and intended audience. Additionally, scholarly peer review and cultural review assure the quality and relevance of educational materials and outreach scholarship.

Extension has actively developed and is expanding a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic programming portfolio that acknowledges Wisconsin as a culturally and linguistically diverse state. Review and

management by our Office of Access, Inclusion, and Compliance ensures the cultural appropriateness and effectiveness of our translations and interpretations.

Stakeholder input: Action Taken to Seek Stakeholder Input

We use several options to seek stakeholder input. Examples are: Public meetings and listening sessions, utilizing media to advertise, and engaging the general public and more targeted stakeholder groups through outreach, needs assessment, and evaluation.

WAES. Stakeholder identification and involvement are key components to the planning processes. The UW-Madison/WAES/CALS administrative leadership group maintains close relationships with leaders of the industries and advocacy groups interested in the disciplines we study. The CALS Administrative Leadership group holds sessions with agricultural industry leaders, heads of state agencies, our own Board of Visitors, and specific commodity groups. The Dean attends a joint meeting of the Wisconsin Agricultural Coalition at least twice annually; this group is made up of executive directors of each of the Wisconsin commodity groups. The Administrative Leadership group also attends several field days at our 12 agricultural research stations located throughout the state. These field days and other public events allow for interaction with a variety of producers and growers representing the breadth of Wisconsin's diverse agriculture.

EXTENSION. Extension is continually engaged in stakeholder input. Given our place-based organizational model, we are deeply embedded in communities and regularly gather stakeholder input through both formal (e.g., focus groups and listening sessions) and informal methods. For example, Area Extension Directors lead our 21 local administrative areas, and educators identify local needs in collaboration with stakeholders through ongoing needs assessments and annual work planning processes. In addition, the Dean and program leadership frequently meet with partner organizations, representatives from stakeholder groups, and federal, state, and local elected officials. Extension also meets with our Board of Visitors bi-annually to gather input related to our programming and operations.

In addition to the ongoing planning and needs assessment efforts outlined above, Extension is currently engaging in a strategic planning process (2022 to 2023) led by a cross-organizational work group. This work will result in a Strategic Plan to guide our division over the next five years. The Strategic Plan will: (1) Identify internal partners that need to engage in and understand our strategic direction; (2) Identify current external partners, potential partners, and Tribal Nations that can provide us with their perspective of desired services aligned with our purpose; and (3) Include an implementation plan, including suggested metrics to measure success.

The Strategic Plan development process consists of three phases: In the first phase we will collect and analyze information and data from internal staff, external key partners, and from key audiences. In the second phase we will identify potential barriers and opportunities, and we will develop the strategies to address them. The third phase will consist of implementation, specifically through the allocation of resources and structural/organizational adaptation. We anticipate that this three-step process will be completed by the end of the 2023 calendar year. We are currently in the first phase of the process (collection of data and engagement with stakeholders), and we anticipate to complete this phase in early 2023.

Stakeholder input: Methods to Identify Individuals and Groups

We use various methods to identify our stakeholders. Examples are: Advisory committees; Focus group Surveys; Listening sessions; Public events.

CALS and Extension leadership maintain a close relationship with leaders of the industries and advocacy groups that have an interest in disciplines we study. In addition, regularly attending field days, hosted at our 12 agricultural research stations, and other public events (e.g. World Dairy Expo) allows leaders to personally interact with a variety of producers and growers (offering advice to explore new stakeholders) representing the breadth of Wisconsin agriculture. We intentionally reach out to groups organized around new and expanding Wisconsin agricultural sectors. Members of Extension's Board of Visitors were identified via leadership seeking out multiple perspectives and by asking Extension colleagues to make membership recommendations.

EXTENSION. As part of our Strategic Planning process, Extension has created a work group representing a cross-section of our organization (county faculty, county staff, campus-based faculty, administration/operations staff and more). This team, in turn, identifies critical external stakeholders based on their experience, their connections, and the audiences they serve. Within this process we are strategically prioritizing our local constituents (county partners and First Nations), and we are working on strategies to reach out to community-based groups that are led by and/or serving traditionally under-served and under-represented audiences in Wisconsin.

Stakeholder input: Methods for Collecting Stakeholder Input

Stakeholders' input for the development and conduct of research relating to state needs are accomplished in a tiered system. Many departments, centers, and institutes maintain advisory committees that meet periodically with researchers in the units. Departments convey this input to the CALS Administrative Leadership Group.

A Board of Visitors advises CALS and meets with the Administrative Leadership Group twice a year. That board includes accomplished and influential individuals representing a number of interest groups, including agriculture producers, industries, consumers, environmentalists, and state agencies. In addition to advising CALS on research and outreach needs, the board provides a source of contacts of various constituencies.

Input is continuously gathered by Extension from diverse partners and stakeholders statewide through needs assessments led by individual educators and broader needs assessments done at administrative area levels and statewide program levels. We also collect stakeholder input through program planning, implementation, and evaluation efforts. Statewide team efforts accord with the local context, where all Wisconsin county Extension offices have civil rights plans designed to increase access to traditionally underserved audiences.

In addition, Extension's Strategic Planning initiative (outlined above) gathers input around broader direction and the future of our work through surveys and facilitated conversations.

Stakeholder input: A Statement of How the Input Will Be Considered

Stakeholder input is considered in various ways, for example: budget processes; identification of emerging issues and in some cases desired outcomes related to those issues; action plans (e.g. developing and evaluating programs); redirection of Extension and research program areas; hiring processes.

Stakeholder input forms a critical cornerstone in the way that we develop all of our programming and allows us to identify priority issues and avenues for resolving those issues. Driven by such input, program planning and evaluation practices are ongoing and produce evidence for driving decision-making on the priority issues. Decision-making unfolds in many ways, including the following: a.) incorporating input into WAES-Extension budget and staffing decisions, b.) shaping team implementation and evaluation plans as well as statewide plans of work; c.) combining input with available research to refine program design, and d.) our workforce's expertise and ability to bring the right people and partners together to address a priority issue ensures continued input.

Findings of Extension's Strategic Plan process (outlined above) will consist of the allocation of resources and structural/organizational adaptation.

Critical Issues

Energy and Sustainability of Natural Resources

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019
State: Wisconsin

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

WAES and Extension conduct research and outreach on climate change impacts and natural resources conservation to support communities, agriculture, local economies and human health. Projects seek to advance sustainable forest management, minimize pesticide use, improve water quality and quantity on working lands, and improve soil health.

Science Emphasis Area

Agroclimate Science, Bioeconomy, Bioenergy, and Bioproducts, Environmental Systems, Youth Development

Food Accessibility, Safety and Nutrition

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019
State: Wisconsin

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

WAES and Extension provide research-based education and assistance to improve food security by increasing access to healthy foods for vulnerable populations and those in need; responding to growing consumer demands for sustainably produced local foods, strengthening local food markets and systems; and promoting healthy diets. Research also focuses on understanding and reducing food-borne illnesses, while developing and disseminating new technologies to improve food safety.

Science Emphasis Area

Family & Consumer Sciences, Food Safety, Human Nutrition, Youth Development

Health Equity & Well-Being

Initiated on: Oct 01, 2022
State: Wisconsin

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

Extension catalyzes positive change in Wisconsin communities to promote health and well-being for all individuals and respond to emerging health issues. Our research-based programs increase individual skills and behaviors aligned with healthy lifestyles to achieve positive mental health, reduce risky substance use and prevent chronic disease. Our programs build community capacity to address health inequities, support environmental and systems changes that create healthy communities, and utilize effective health communications strategies to advance health equity and well-being.

Science Emphasis Area

Family & Consumer Sciences

Human Development and Relationships

Initiated on: Mar 12, 2020
State: Wisconsin

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

Extension provides the tools Wisconsinites need to support families in caring for each other in ways that promote growth,understanding, and resilience. Our programs promote aging-friendly communities, coach effective parents and caregivers, support early childhood development, and help individuals build skills and capacity for long-term financial planning and wellbeing.

Science Emphasis Area

Family & Consumer Sciences

Positive Youth Development

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019
State: Wisconsin

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

Extension engages Wisconsin youth in opportunities they need to learn, lead, grow, and thrive. Our 4-H clubs, groups, and camps provide educational opportunities grounded in research and culture where youth discover and build on their strengths. We train adult volunteers and community members who apply skills that create positive youth development experiences and relationships, within our programs and multiplied throughout communities. We support civic spaces and strengthen organizations where youth and adults work to create resilient, youth-supporting communities.

Science Emphasis Area

Family & Consumer Sciences, Youth Development

Sustainable Ag Systems and Production

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019
State: Wisconsin

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

WAES and Extension conduct research to develop sustainable food production systems that enhance soil, water, animal, and crop health while increasing productivity. The demand for goods and services will only increase in the future as the population grows, and it is our mission to find new ways to increase production while minimizing environmental impacts, such as greenhouse gas emissions and nutrient losses.

Science Emphasis Area

Sustainable Agricultural Production Systems

Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

Initiated on: Feb 28, 2019
State: Wisconsin

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

Communities are interested in developing renewable energy industries for energy independence, job creation, and economic development. The WAES incorporates research to benefit forest production, weed management, surface water quality, and promote new farm based practices. Extension campus and county faculty and staff are conducting integrated research and extension programs, and building capacity for scalable, sustainable energy among extension colleagues and communities.

Science Emphasis Area

Urban and Rural Community Vitality

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019
State: Wisconsin

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

To promote community development, WAES and Extension help inform and teach decision-makers, community members, and farmers and their families regarding ways to promote success in farming and other economic sectors, organize to address community needs, and strategies for improving the overall quality of life.

Science Emphasis Area

Education and Multicultural Alliances, Environmental Systems, Family & Consumer Sciences, Sustainable Agricultural Production Systems, Youth Development

Wisconsin Competitive Program

Initiated on: Nov 26, 2019
State: Wisconsin

Term Length: Long-term (>5 years)

WAES addresses several state priority issues that cannot be classified in the above critical issues. These projects contribute to several areas such as the management of invasive exotic organisms.

Science Emphasis Area

Agroclimate Science, Bioeconomy, Bioenergy, and Bioproducts, Environmental Systems, Family & Consumer Sciences, Food Safety, Human Nutrition, Sustainable Agricultural Production Systems