

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING (COMBINED)

III. Stakeholder Input:

In 1997 the University of Wyoming contracted with the Custom Syndicated Research, Inc. to prepare a statewide stakeholder satisfactions study. In the survey, county clientele were asked to list the most pressing issues facing the county for the next 3 - 5 years and the most pressing issues facing the family for the next 3 - 5 year. The results of these intermediate and long term issues were gathered for each county and compiled for the state.

In addition to the pressing issues facing the county and family mentioned above, other questions asked included: have local people been involved in determining extension programs; are the programs based on current knowledge/research; are programs responsive to requests; what type of contact have you had with the extension office; what types of services were used; how could individuals be better served; and what is the purpose of the county extension program.

The Most Pressing Issues Facing the County for the Next 3 - 5 Years

Issues mentioned by respondents can be divided into several categories including economic, environmental, health and education. The most frequently mentioned issues included "growth increase", "influx of people", "business, economic development, growth", "environmental issues, conservation", "water supply, drought, use", "economic issues (general)", "education, schools", "money finances", "jobs, employment, career opportunities", "lack of funding for county programs or services", "agriculture and the survival of Ag", "public land issues and use", and "government regulation and controls".

The Most Pressing Issues Facing Family for the Next 3 - 5 Years

When thinking of family issues, more emphasis was given to personal finances, education and health. Whereas environmental issues were considered more important when considering questions facing the county. The most frequently mentioned issues include "money/finances", "education/college", "health, fitness and nutrition", "job or career security/opportunities", "family and child development/parenting", "retirement or planning for retirement", "economic issues (unspecific)", "inflation or cost of living", "cattle/livestock prices", "cost of or paying for education", and "taxes".

Following the statewide survey several counties conducted an individual program review and needs assessment that included focus groups and individual clientele contacts. Information gathered from the assessments is being used to determine the intermediate and long term needs.

The county programs utilize their formal or informal advisory councils to determine programming direction, especially for short term needs. In some counties, the advisory councils are program specific; whereas, others represent the total Cooperative Extension Service. The current advisory councils are representative of the county demographics, including gender, ethnicity, interests, and residence. Individuals represent elected officials, business people, home and business owners, school personnel, governmental agencies such as Department of Family Services, and Natural Resources and Conservation Service, commodity groups, and volunteers.

In addition to input through county extension programs, the College of Agriculture has four Research & Extension Centers located across the state. Each of the four Research & Extension Centers has an advisory committee that meets annually. These advisory committees are provided information on existing research and outreach programs and they provide input regarding priority needs for research and outreach. Some of the top priorities they have identified are alternative crops, sustainable agricultural systems, grass and alfalfa seed production, and economic analysis of all research projects. The college of Agriculture maintains a separate statewide advisory committee. That committee meets annually to exchange information of the college's programs and to seek input of future concerns and issues. Three Departments, Animal Science, Family & Consumer Sciences, and Veterinary Sciences, have separate advisory committees that provide input on programs in those departments.

Stakeholder input through formal and informal advisory committees will be continued by the College of Agriculture. In addition, every five years a needs assessment, focus groups, and a random survey will be conducted statewide to determine the Cooperative Extension Service and Research needs for the state. On a rotating basis following the state assessment, a district needs assessment, including focus groups, will be administered, with each county in the specified district participating.

Additional input will be gathered from the advisory councils within each of the four districts. The research and extension center's advisory committees will also be incorporated. Information will be included on the web site to allow public input. Thus, the stakeholders will have an opportunity for input about strategic planning.