

Ohio State University Extension Crowdsourcing Insight Summary: Community Development



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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Preface

Purpose

The purpose of a program review is to guide program development on a continual basis. A program review is a process that evaluates the status, effectiveness, and progress of programs and helps identify future direction and priorities. Program reviews are a standard practice in youth development programs (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016) and higher education (Halonen & Dunn, 2017). The Ohio State University Extension Community Development program review is a voluntary practice for self-study and external review.

The Review Includes Five Elements

- The State of Youth Development in Ohio
- Ohio State University Extension 4-H Youth Development Internal Self-Study
- Ohio State University Extension Crowdsourcing Insight Summary: Community Development
- External committee visits and final report
- Key stakeholder communication throughout the process

Context

Ohio State University Extension embarked upon a multi-year effort to build the Extension organization of the future. That journey began with the [Vice President's Conversation on the Future of Extension](#). The overall goal of that effort was to ensure that OSU Extension remains relevant and responsive to the needs of Ohioans well into the future.

Data gathered through the *Vice President's Conversation* was used as a foundation for a [designEXT effort to put ideas into action](#). One of the designEXT steps includes partnering with individuals and communities to co-create multi-faceted solutions for current and emerging issues.

The *OSU Extension Community Development Program Review* is the second of a series of OSU Extension program reviews.

ONE Thing

Our land-grant mission –

OSU Extension delivers knowledge from Ohio State to every county in Ohio, and we work **WITH** people right where they live to strengthen their own lives and communities.

*(excerpt from OSU Extension Interim Director update,
Jackie Kirby Wilkins – August 2019)*

Contact

Ohio State University (OSU) Extension Program Reviews are conducted on behalf of Dr. Jackie Kirby Wilkins, interim director of OSU Extension for the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences. The OSU Extension Community Development Program Review was led by Dr. Julie Fox and Dr. Greg Davis, with support from Michelle Gaston and Terri Fisher.

<https://extension.osu.edu/strategic-initiatives/ohio-community-development-program-review>

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*For the purpose of this report, the Ohio State University Extension
Community Development program may be referred to simply as Ohio CD or CD.*

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

One of Ohio State University Extension's four program areas is Community Development (CD). It partners in delivering evidence-based programs and services to individuals, organizations, and communities to develop skilled and engaged leaders, sustainable and livable communities, and greater vitality with a more defined sense of purpose. Since hiring the first regional CD agents in 1960, OSU Extension has served as a catalyst that brings people, organizations, and communities together to get things done. For nearly 60 years, a mix of county-, regional-, and state-based CD professionals have helped communities with:

- economic development,
- leadership development,
- organizational capacity building, and
- community planning.

This crowdsourcing insight summary is part of the Community Development (CD) program review that evaluates the status, effectiveness, and progress of programs and helps identify future direction and priorities.

B. Methods

The OSU Extension Learning and Organizational Development (LOD) unit administered a crowdsourcing two-question survey. Crowdsourcing is an effective and powerful practice of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of geographically dispersed people (Doan, Ramakrishnan, & Halevy, 2011; Estellés-Arolas & González-Ladrón-De-Guevara, 2012; Merriam-Webster, 2014; Raison, Fox & D'Adamo-Damery, 2014).

In May 2019 a two-question survey invitation was sent via email to 982 OSU Extension personnel included on the "ALL-Extension" listserv and employees in The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences human resources database who have an Extension appointment. Two follow-up reminders were sent to non-respondents. All Extension personnel were included in this inquiry to gain insight from interdisciplinary perspectives. There were 307 respondents for a response rate of 31.3%.

Two evaluators on the OSU Extension Learning and Organizational Development team analyzed the survey data using NVivo 12 software. After reading through the transcriptions, the codebook was created by one evaluator and then verified by the second evaluator. Then the two evaluators collaboratively reviewed the coding system for validity. The transcriptions were coded independently, and then the files were combined for the final analysis.

During the analysis process, themes that participants mentioned more often and across most of the participants were identified as "Primary Themes" and themes that were mentioned in some responses were identified as "Secondary Themes." Some themes were identified but rarely mentioned, so were not included in the report. This report will highlight the findings of the two survey questions.

C. Summary of Findings

Two open-ended questions prompted responses with primary and secondary themes.

Question 1. Based on what you know about OSU Extension Community Development (CD), if you could transform the CD program in any way you wish, what one to three things would you do?

Primary Themes: Communication; Collaboration and partnership; Human resources,

Secondary Theme: Community needs; Workforce development; Youth; Economic development

Question 2. Based on what you experience and observe in Ohio communities where you live, work, and play, what are the most pressing issues OSU Extension Community Development should address to better meet needs of Ohioans in the future?

Primary Themes: Workforce development; Economic development

Secondary Themes: Drugs and opioid; Collaboration and partnership; Food system and food security

From the qualitative analysis of the crowdsourcing information, there was overlap in some of the themes identified in the responses to the two questions.

II. Question 1. Based on what you know about OSU Extension Community Development (CD), if you could transform the CD program in any way you wish, what one to three things would you do?

A. Primary Themes

1. Communication: Communication is a major category that is identified by most of the crowdsourcing participants. In this category, the participants stressed the significance of using different marketing tools to communicate and increase people's awareness about CD both within Extension and with other stakeholders. Participants shared their opinion that many people within Extension are not aware about CD programing and its contribution to communities. Also, some comments were that people don't have sufficient information about CD.

Examples:

"More marketing and promotion to make both internal and external audiences more aware of the programs."

"Raise the level of public identity. No one really knows what CD is about."

"Create a simple local community flyer/brochure branded with OSU branding on what CD does within their local community, (do not make it general, make it personal to the community) with pictures of progress in CD Development, and a picture of CD Educator in action. I have had several clientele ask me what CDs do local for them or their community."

2. Collaboration and Partnerships: It is clearly a predominant category for most of the participants. In this category, participants suggested more collaboration and partnerships between Community Development (CD) and three partners: OSU Extension programs; community partners; and community leaders and decision makers.

- a) **OSU Extension Programs:** Crowdsourcing respondents emphasized the importance of more collaboration between the CD program and other OSU Extension programs.

Examples:

“In many ways community development is part of all Extension work, but it is not approached that way in Ohio. A more integrated and holistic approach could be beneficial for making connections and ultimately better supporting our communities.”

“Work in alignment with the other three Extension-based programs to make a specific difference in the lives of the people who are economically non advantaged.”

“Create transdisciplinary workgroups with CD professionals and other program area staff.”

- b) **Community Partners:** In this code, participants believed that the CD program should be more focused on building partnerships and leveraging on existing ones within communities.

Examples:

“Focus on improving communities through individuals. Other agencies are better staffed/funded to work on business development.”

“CD should do more collaborative work with FCS, public health, and social work to explore how health (mental and physical) is related to the growth and stability of communities.”

“We need to work together with job and family department and housing and others governor agencies as part of the requirements to apply for those services.”

- c) **Community Leaders and Decision Makers:** Many participants gave special consideration to community leaders and advised for increased collaboration and work with commissioners and community leaders to facilitate the development of communities.

Examples:

“Offer programs of newly elected commissioners, mayors, and city council on economic revitalization, community revitalization, and bringing young people back to your community.”

“More collaboration with local government and community partners.”

“Consistent work with the county commissioners in each county related to local needs. This is not just coordination.”

3. Human Resources: Lack of CD staff in many counties is a major concern shared by most of the participants. It is recommended to increase the number of CD staff and extend services to more communities in Ohio.

Examples:

“Put a CD educator in every county. Some counties do not have them and therefore, do not have that area of support.”

“Increase capacity to serve more counties through staffing.”

“Unknown programs due to no one in position locally.”

Some participants offered some resolutions to the lack of staff and provided some suggestions such as having more joint appointments or multi county appointments for CD educators:

Examples:

“Have more of an Extension CD presence in the counties (split educator appointments or CD educators serving multiple counties?)”

“Consider CD educator as a multi-county position.”

“Increase joint-appointments (Ag-CD, 4H-CD, FCS-CD) to help meet local demand in counties.”

B. Secondary Themes

1. Community Needs: Participants mention community needs quite often and in two different contexts; assessing community needs and responding to community needs.

- a) **Assessing Community Needs:** In this category participants focused on identifying local and regional needs of Ohioans.

Examples:

“Complete a needs assessment that is used across the state, so the data is comparable.”

“Increase prioritizing identifying local, community, regional industry, or corporate partners to provide resources to support those new community programs.”

“I would conduct a statewide community development needs assessment. I would analyze that data by regions from which that data came (perhaps using the regional map previously used by OSU Extension). I would divvy that analysis into a focus of one of the CD steward roles.”

- b) **Responding to Community Needs:** Participants went beyond identifying the needs and suggested CD programs to assist in addressing and responding to the different needs of Ohioans.

Examples:

“Involve the “community” in identifying their most pressing needs and soliciting any solutions they may have.”

“Assist with strategies to address community issues.”

“Be in touch with partners and organizations to stay on top of the most pressing issues, including feedback from the county advisory board CD folks or other program area board members who have needs that CD could address locally.”

2. Workforce Development: Some participants emphasized the need to providing training and educational opportunities related to increasing employment opportunities.

Examples:

“Have CD work more directly with employers in the community.”

“Reach out to local workforce prep institutions/agencies/schools.”

“Offer job skilled clinic or workshop.”

3. Youth: This is a secondary theme that recurred with some participants. The participants focused on youth’s education and employment skills.

- a) **Employment:** In the youth category, participants were concerned about the youth’s employability and recommended that CD programs contribute to providing youth with the skills necessary for employment.

Examples:

“Promote in school curriculum how to apply for jobs, interview skills, dress attire, communication with prospective employers.”

“Introduce new programs for youth interns to gain a skill and be paid.”

“Partner more with youth programming to provide work force skill readiness.”

- b) **Education:** In the youth category, most participants recommended CD programs to be engagement with schools and colleges with different focus areas.

Examples:

“Work on helping our youth pursue high education not just a 4-year college, but any training beyond high school.”

“Prepare/educate youth minority in the areas of leadership, STEM.”

“Partner with community colleges.”

“Partner with vocational school.”

4. Economic Development: Support to economic development is identified as a secondary theme. This category included general comments to supporting communities with economic development and some specific to supporting small business and entrepreneurs.

- a) **Support to Small Business and Entrepreneurs:** Many participants in this category recommended CD programs to provide support to small business owners and entrepreneurs.

Examples:

“Develop a focus on the accessibility of funding for women entrepreneurs and those from minoritized communities.”

“Develop programming/education to work along with local economic development on small business loans, revolving loan funds, individual resume writing.”

“Assist with business plans to increase small businesses.”

- b) **General Economic Development:** No specific definition was mentioned by participants in this category, so any recommendations of supporting economic development were grouped in this category.

Examples:

“Have a county person be involved in new economic growth in our county. We do not have any representation on any of the local groups in economic development.”

“Focus more on business/economic dev including workforce.”

“It would be beneficial to have CD participate in the economic development in the rural counties.”

III. Question 2. Based on what you experience and observe in Ohio communities where you live, work, and play, what are the most pressing issues OSU Extension Community Development should address to better meet needs of Ohioans in the future?

A. Primary Themes

1. Workforce Development: Workforce development is identified as a primary theme mentioned by most of the participants. Some recommendations are very specific in the type of support CD can provide such as training in specific areas or connecting people to certain agencies for finding jobs. However, some recommendations are very generic and only mentions that CD needs to work on workforce development.

Examples:

“Workforce – completing neat applications for employment.”

We lost many jobs several years ago and the job market is slowly coming back. How do we help people to want to work?”

“Collaborating with and expanding current workforce development programs to place county residents in jobs created from the arrival of new businesses mentioned above.”

“Many individuals in rural Ohio are unaware of the local employment opportunities, and through OSU Extension Community Development programming, it is possible to broaden participants’ horizons.”

2. Economic Development: As a primary theme for this question, most participants emphasized the importance of economic development. Some participants were specific about supporting small business and entrepreneurship, while the rest of the participants did not specify the type of economic development support expected from CD in their respective counties.

- a) **Support to Small Business and Entrepreneurship:** Many participants in this category recommended CD programs to provide support to small business owners and entrepreneurs.

Examples:

“Navigating regulations that apply to small businesses, especially new small businesses.”

“Work with entrepreneurs to be more financially stable and successful.”

“Work as “contractors” who guide agencies as they develop missions/goal/visions; act as a mediator and support as local businesses work with port authorities and other county agencies that are difficult for new/small business owners to navigate/understand; work on local initiatives like food incubators and alternative energy production sites; assist communities in developing “healthy community” plans which include a complete vision for green spaces, bike friendly roadways, and trails.”

- a) **Other Economic Development:** No specific definition was mentioned by participants in this category, so any recommendations of supporting economic development are grouped here.

Examples:

“Obviously bringing businesses to communities and creating more jobs is the priority throughout Ohio, and Extension offers education and information to help this process. Too often this is not known or utilized by others.”

“Training and continuing education for existing staff, and data driven research on the economic drivers of Ohio’s local economy.”

“The Montgomery County OSU Extension office is located in an economically depressed area of the county and could greatly benefit from CD programs.”

B. Secondary Themes

1. Drugs and Opioids: Many of the participants emphasized the importance of addressing drugs and opioids as one of the concerns facing Ohioans. According to participants, CD is expected to provide educational programs and connect people to the appropriate services. The impact of drugs on all aspects of life such as employment and parenting.

Examples:

“Due to drug use as one big issue – finding employees to fill available positions is an ongoing issue for local employers. If we do not find sustainable employees can we retain these businesses? We have lots of available employment and not enough eligible employees to fill all that is available due to drug use issues.

“Connect people of all ages to services that would benefit them, mental health issues, addiction.”

“The overarching issue in many counties is the drug issue, which affects all program areas.”

“Build community capacity with health programs to improve access and reduce opioid abuse and misuse.”

2. Collaboration and Partnership: A secondary theme is collaboration and partnership which was mentioned by some of the participants where they recommended for CD to collaborate with community partners, community leaders, and decision makers. Participants recommended more collaboration with other Extension programs and CD.

- a) **OSU Extension Programs:** A considerable number of the participants emphasized the importance of CD programs to collaborate with other Extension programs; family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, and agriculture and natural resources.

Examples:

"I think there are also many opportunities for CD to collaborate with the other program areas, particularly community nutrition. Promoting health and wellness within the community and helping its leaders understand how to sustain the initiatives can be difficult. CD professionals can be a great asset to many ongoing projects across the state."

"Community Development needs to find a way to involve SNAP-Ed more. I, personally, would love to do so much education in the Marion community, but am limited by the guidelines of the grant."

"First of all we need more well-trained community development staff throughout the state or train our existing staff in CD principles."

- b) **Community Partners:** Many participants supported more collaboration between CD and local institutions and government agencies.

Examples:

"Need for greater collaboration and cooperation among organizations within communities. This would avoid duplication of services and help organizations work together rather than competing against one another."

"Helping area leaders with economic development and enhancing ways for communication between county agencies and community leaders about services currently available to limit duplication of services along with enhancing what is currently available."

"How CD can work in conjunction/collaboration with the local chambers of commerce, not in competition with."

- c) **Government and Elected Officials:** Some participants recommended CD to engage with government entities and elected officials with focus at the local/county level.

Examples:

"Working with local governments and entities to attract new businesses to our county. Identify areas of need (i.e. lack of day care- recruit individuals to open a day care center; areas of food insecurity- recruit individuals and businesses to create a local food co-op)."

"Partner with elected officials to find resources to address local community issues such as litter control, workforce development."

"Working with government to be more financially stable at all levels – not just at the state."

3. Food System and Food Security: Food system and security is a secondary theme that is mentioned by many of the participants. People suggested addressing concerns related to availability and access to healthy food.

Examples:

“Nutrition and access to healthy, affordable foods.”

“Local food issues/food deserts.”

“Food security and role in health, voice for the types of food being bought in stores by the public.”

IV. Comparing Rural Vs. Urban Respondents

In this part, an attempt is made to explore differences in responses and opinions between rural and urban respondents. The rurality and urbanity of participants location were predetermined, as all participants are OSU employees, and this information was available, in other words participants did not have to fill out this information. The location category had four responses; rural, urban, suburban, and NA (which means no information available about the location of the participant). The breakdown of the location of the participants is as follows: 82 rural, 90 suburban, 65 urban, and 70 NA, with a total of 307 participants. For this analysis, the categories urban and suburban were grouped under (urban), so the total of urban becomes 155 and rural 82. During the analysis (urban vs. rural only) NA category was not included.

Overall, there was no difference in primary and secondary themes for participants in different locations (urban and rural) however, a slight difference was noticed in Question 2 for rural participants, as a secondary theme was identified. The secondary theme is “rural areas issues and concerns,” which means concerns that were specific to rural areas.

The rural areas concerns were sub-grouped as follows:

Transportation: Participants shared their concern about access to efficient transportation system.

Examples:

“We need public transportation in the smaller cities and towns for those who don't have their own vehicles.”

“Transportation is a major issue holding communities back.”

“Need to solve transportation.”

Access to Internet/High-Speed Internet: The availability of internet coverage, as well as internet services reliability, are the issues addressed by some of the participants from rural areas.

Examples:

“Fast internet access for all communities. The digital divide continues to grow even though funding is supposedly available. Communities need help to provide fast internet for the school children and businesses.”

“Connectivity issues in rural Ohio – everyone in Columbus thinks the internet and cell service is everywhere and it is not!”

“Better internet services.”

Additional concerns shared by a few participants but not enough to make a subgroup include:

Brain Drain: A few participants pointed at the issue of out-migration of educated people.

Downtown Rehabilitation: Rebuilding some of the abandoned areas and have some attractions and entertainment.

V. Conclusion

From the qualitative analysis of the crowdsourcing information the following conclusions can be drawn.

A significant concern shared by most of the participants in the first question and some of the participants in the second question is communication. Participants emphasized the importance of publicity and promotion of the Community Development (CD) program. A recognized number of participants were not aware of the CD program and its contribution to OSU Extension in their respective counties. Therefore, it is recommended for CD program to increase its publicity in all counties of Ohio, which can be achieved through a marketing strategy as well as building and maintaining partnerships with communities and community leaders as recommended by many of the participants. In addition, participants suggested more collaboration between CD and other OSU Extension programs for more efficient and effective programming.

The difference between rural and urban respondents and the emergence of themes specific to rural respondents such as transportation and internet accessibility makes it critical to program for a diverse audience.

In conclusion, the CD program needs to concentrate its efforts in being visible to OSU Extension employees as well as other stakeholders to be able to address the needs of Ohioans.

VI. References

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