



# Preface

## Purpose

The purpose of a review is to guide organizational development on a continual basis. A review, based on a point-in-time perspective, is a process that evaluates the status, effectiveness, and progress of organizational units, and helps identify future direction and priorities. Reviews are standard practice in higher education (Halonen & Dunn, 2017). The Ohio State University (OSU) Extension reviews are a voluntary practice for self-study and external review.

## This Review Includes Four Elements

- The Ohio State University South Centers Self-Study Report
- The Ohio State University South Centers Crowdsourcing Insight Report
- External Committee Visits and External Review Report
- Recap, Reflection, and Action Strategies

## Context

As a part of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES), OSU Extension engages in ongoing organizational development efforts that leverage the past, focus on current priorities, and advance the future. That journey has included the Vice President's Conversation on the Future of Extension, a series of Extension program reviews, and other initiatives to align resources with university and community priorities.

This crowdsourcing report, a summary of survey results with various internal audiences, is one of multiple documents included in the review of the OSU South Centers, which is part of the CFAES statewide campus. The self-study report includes historical perspective, current context, and potential future direction. The external review report focuses on observations and recommendations.

In alignment with the national land-grant university community, OSU South Centers team engages in the tripartite mission of teaching, conducting research, and providing Extension engagement with variously defined communities. Similar to other land-grant university research and Extension centers, OSU South Centers reflects the university and local community contexts, and leverages local, state, and federal partnerships to serve Ohioans.

Through reflections and next steps, the OSU South Centers will continue addressing priorities in alignment with the college, community, and land-grant university mission.

“Extension is with the people, of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

(Smith, 1949)

## Contact

Ohio State University Extension Reviews are conducted on behalf of David Civittolo, interim director of OSU Extension and associate dean, College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences. This review was led by Julie Fox, PhD, with project management and editing support from Michelle Gaston, OSU Extension Strategic Initiatives.

[extension.osu.edu/strategic-initiatives](https://extension.osu.edu/strategic-initiatives); [fox.264@osu.edu](mailto:fox.264@osu.edu)

# Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>I. Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
A. Purpose .....	4
B. Methods.....	4
C. Respondents.....	5
D. Summary of Findings.....	7
<b>II. Themes</b> .....	<b>8</b>
A. Primary Themes.....	8
1. User Engagement and Integration.....	8
2. Products.....	10
B. Secondary Themes .....	11
1. Administration and Management .....	11
2. Communications.....	13
<b>III. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>IV. Appendices</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Appendix A. CFAES Statewide Campus .....	15
Appendix B. Coding Chart.....	16
Appendix B. References.....	17

## Contributors

Teresa McCoy, DPA, OSU Extension, Director, Learning & Organizational Development

Debby Lewis, Ph.D., OSU Extension, Resource Planning Analyst

Julie Fox, Ph.D., OSU Extension, Director, Strategic Initiatives

## Editor

Michelle Gaston, OSU Extension, Project Coordinator

# **I. Introduction**

## **A. Purpose**

This crowdsourcing insight summary is part of The Ohio State University South Centers review that evaluates the status, effectiveness, and progress of teams and organizational units and helps identify future direction and priorities.

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 et al., 2011; Estellés-Arolas & González-Ladrón-De-Guevara, 2012; Merriam-Webster, 2014; Raison et al., 2014).

## **B. Methods**

The OSU Extension Learning and Organizational Development unit administered a crowdsourcing survey in support of the review of two units – the OSU South Centers and OSU Extension Publishing. In January 2025, a survey was emailed 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 542 respondents for a response rate of 55.2%. During the initial analysis process, thematic categories were identified and were analyzed based on the degree of familiarity. This report was provided to external reviewers as part of a comprehensive review of OSU South Centers.

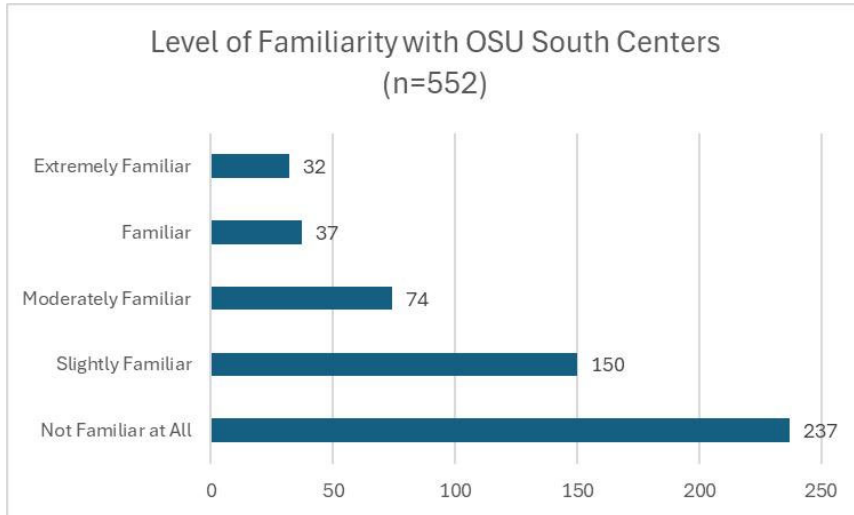
Two evaluators analyzed the survey data. After reading through the transcriptions, the codebook was created by one evaluator and then verified by the second evaluator. Then the two evaluators collaboratively reviewed the coding system for validity. The transcriptions were coded independently, and then the files were reviewed for inter-rater reliability and 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.

The data and analyses provided here represent the collective input of CFAES and OSU Extension faculty and staff members, offering their understanding of and engagement with the unit. This summary is intended to be used as one part of the overall review of OSU South Centers.

### C. Respondents

Overall, 11% of respondents reported that they were either extremely familiar or familiar with OSU South Centers, while 40% reported that they were moderately or slightly familiar with the Centers. Almost one-half (43%) of the respondents said they were not familiar at all with OSU South Centers. Percentages do not equal 100 because of non-response to the question.



Comments from respondents who were either extremely familiar or familiar with OSU South Centers came from 19 counties, with the majority of those counties being in Southern Ohio (Table 1). OSU South Centers is located in Pike County in Southern Ohio. See Appendix A for a map of the CFAES statewide campus.

**Table 1. Counties represented in comments from respondents who were extremely familiar or familiar with OSU South Centers.**

Athens	Greene	Ross
Brown	Highland	Scioto
Butler	Jackson	Shelby
Clermont	Morrow	Vinton
Cuyahoga	Noble	Warren
Fayette	Pike	Wood
Gallia		

Comments from respondents who were not familiar at all with OSU South Centers came from 73 of the 88 Ohio counties, representing the whole of Ohio (Table 2). There were multiple respondents from any one county, therefore the total number of counties does not equal 88.

**Table 2. Counties represented in comments from respondents who were not familiar at all with OSU South Centers.**

Adams	Crawford	Harrison	Monroe	Shelby
Allen	Cuyahoga	Henry	Montgomery	Stark
Ashland	Darke	Highland	Morgan	Summit
Ashtabula	Defiance	Hocking	Morrow	Trumbull
Athens	Delaware	Huron	Muskingum	Tuscarawas
Auglaize	Erie	Licking	Noble	Union
Belmont	Fairfield	Logan	Ottawa	VanWert
Butler	Fayette	Lorain	Paulding	Vinton
Carroll	Fulton	Lucas	Perry	Warren
Champaign	Geauga	Madison	Pickaway	Washington
Clark	Greene	Mahoning	Preble	Wayne
Clermont	Guernsey	Marion	Putnam	Wood
Clinton	Hamilton	Medina	Richland	Wyandot
Columbiana	Hancock	Mercer	Sandusky	
Coshocton	Hardin	Miami	Seneca	

The respondents who were moderately or slightly familiar with OSU South Centers represented a majority of Ohio’s 88 counties.

In addition to county Extension perspectives, respondents included faculty and staff representing all CFAES campuses and departments. Their level of familiarity was similar to all respondents.

Based on the comments, the level of familiarity was based on geographic proximity, programs of interest, and marketing effectiveness. Respondents with familiarity and extreme familiarity provided more detailed comments than those with limited familiarity.

## D. Summary of Findings

Two open-ended questions prompted responses with similar themes. The same coding was used for both questions and findings were combined into primary and secondary themes.

**Question 1.** Based on what you know, how would you transform The Ohio State University South Centers in any way you wish? What one to three things would you recommend?

**Question 2.** Based on what you know, what can the OSU South Centers do to be more responsive to current and emerging needs/issues of Ohioans?

### Primary Themes:

- **User Engagement and Integration**  
Facility use, county Extension collaboration, college research collaboration, academic unit exploration
- **Products**  
Research, education

### Secondary Themes:

- **Administration and Management**  
Leadership focused on purpose and priorities, administrative alignment, infrastructure and operational management
- **Communications**  
Internal audiences, external audiences

The OSU South Centers would benefit from greater clarity of the purpose, programs, and geographic scope of research and education. For those familiar with the OSU South Centers, respondents provided suggestions about leadership, direction, and improvements for the future. Across respondents of all levels of familiarity, there is confusion about the audiences served, the alignment with the college priorities, and the relevant impacts. Respondents suggested the OSU South Centers improve communication, connection, and collaboration with colleagues.

## II. Themes

Two open-ended questions prompted responses with similar themes.

**Question 1.** Based on what you know, how would you transform The Ohio State University South Centers in any way you wish? What one to three things would you recommend?

This question was used in prior OSU Extension program reviews to prompt candid feedback and innovative suggestions.

**Question 2.** Based on what you know, what can the OSU South Centers do to be more responsive to current and emerging needs/issues of Ohioans?

This second question was included in the questionnaire to better understand the link between the OSU South Centers and the mission of Ohio State as a land-grant and a Carnegie-engaged university (Doberneck & Schweitzer, 2017; McDowell, 2003).

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

### A. Primary Themes

Primary themes focused on user engagement and integration and products.

#### 1. User Engagement and Integration

The theme of user engagement and integration includes comments about facility use, programs, partnerships, engagement and integration with counties, departments, and other aspects of CFAES. At least one-half of respondents were not familiar with OSU South Centers. However, there was consensus among respondents who are extremely familiar, familiar, moderately familiar, and slightly familiar that user engagement and integration needs to be improved from what currently exists. Respondents expressed interest in meaningful connections and collaborative relationships with other CFAES colleagues. Comments extended beyond alignment to focus on greater integration with all CFAES campuses, especially those with geographic proximity and shared program interests. Themes that emerged from the data focused on facility use, county Extension collaboration, college research collaboration, and academic education exploration. In summary, the expertise of faculty and staff at the OSU South Centers was noted and that connections across all of Extension and CFAES should be made. OSU South Centers should provide CFAES faculty and students opportunities to engage with the research and education taking place there.

##### a) Facility use

A common perception is that the OSU South Centers facilities are not being used to the full extent. This perception about facilities includes laboratory, classroom, office, and meeting space. This perception included questions about the cost of maintaining the facilities versus the benefits of use. The need for hybrid learning spaces was mentioned, along with the need to adequately maintain the existing space.

### *Examples*

- *“Increase use of the facility.”*
- *“Utilize facilities in innovative ways.”*
- *“South Centers is not being utilized to its full potential. Half the time, the buildings and offices are empty there. South Centers is sitting on MILLIONS of dollars for no reason and needs to act.”*
- *“Align programs with College priorities.”*
- *“It is a very strategically placed center and has a lot of potential to make an impact on Ohio Communities.”*

### **b) County Extension collaboration**

Respondents believe that the OSU South Centers should engage with local county staff, especially those in counties in Southern Ohio. Mention was made of the need for all Extension program areas (4-H, ANR, CD, and FCS) to become better engaged in and integrated with OSU South Centers.

### *Examples*

- *“South Centers needs to be better integrated into the greater Extension system.”*
- *“Since Extension is boots on the ground in Ohio counties/communities, brainstorm how you can assist us more directly.”*
- *“South Centers staff conducting programming in counties need to be in contact with the local Extension offices prior to finalizing programs and promoting them. When possible, use Extension educators as part of the educational programming – we are in the same college and need to work together.”*
- *“Be more interactive with adjacent Extension educators to conduct research/Extension opportunities.”*
- *“Provide other Extension team members opportunities to collaborate with South Centers.”*
- *“Utilize Extension educators to serve as an informal advisory committee to provide input on types of research, business development assistance, or educational programming that is needed but is beyond the expertise of the Extension educators.”*
- *“Work together with Extension and not as a competitor.”*
- *“More continuity with Extension as opposed to being on their own island.”*

### **c) College Research Collaboration**

Clear processes are needed to help college researchers understand both how to collaborate with and use space of the OSU South Centers. Shared research space at the OSU South Centers should align with the college research agenda across the state.

### *Examples*

- *“Researchers should collaborate more with others.”*
- *“Provide a clear process for CFAES researchers to collaborate and utilize space/research facilities at South Centers.”*
- *“Align research programs and personnel with academic units.”*

#### **d) Academic education exploration**

Suggestions were made to increase the offerings of undergraduate courses, especially for non-traditional students who need to take classes on weekday evenings or weekends.

##### *Examples*

- *“Align research programs and personnel with academic units.”*
- *“Create better ways for academic units to collaborate with the South Centers.”*
- *“Leverage the southern Ohio location to recruit more students into CFAES undergraduate programs.”*
- *“South Centers could be expanded to offer in-person undergraduate courses for more non-traditional students.”*
- *“Have relevant CCP (College Credit Plus) offerings.”*

## **2. Products**

The primary theme of products included coded comments about research and education. This theme is closely aligned with the suggestions for greater integration with county Extension teams and college departments.

#### **a) Educational programs**

Respondents believe that more educational products could be offered from OSU South Centers, running the gamut from workshops for faculty and staff members to sessions for clientele. Specific suggestions for educational products included field days, field trips to the OSU South Centers, on site K-12 offerings, and degree programs.

##### *Examples*

- *“Provide more resources for county educators for all regions of Ohio.”*
- *“Do more field days to get people to the Centers.”*

#### **b) Research**

Several comments were made about the need to improve educational resources and recognition related to the research work occurring at the OSU South Centers. Calls were made for the expansion of current research, more involvement of educators into OSU South Centers research, and integration of the OSU South Centers research portfolio into the overall CFAES portfolio.

##### *Examples*

- *“Would be great if there was a way to involve county-based educators in research work being done at the South Centers. Educators would bring more “traffic” to the South Centers if they were more involved.”*
- *“Continue cutting edge research and get that out to Extension educators and the public.”*
- *“Recognize and appreciate research work and achievements.”*
- *“Find better ways to publish research beyond just on their own site and in southern Ohio.”*

- *“Establish a dedicated program to integrate agro-voltaic systems into existing research areas, combining renewable energy.”*
- *“Originally, there was a forest products researcher out of this office. It would be highly beneficial to the Ohio Forest Products Industry to bring in someone new into this type of position.”*

## **B. Secondary Themes**

The primary theme of administration and management includes leadership, operations, location, infrastructure, and ideas about the OSU South Centers’ future. Appreciation for faculty and staff members was expressed, as well as interest in retaining talented, diverse people in a productive and equitable environment.

### **1. Administration and Management**

At least one-half of respondents who were not familiar with OSU South Centers. However, there was consensus among respondents who are extremely familiar, familiar, moderately familiar, and slightly familiar that new leadership and management could help the OSU South Centers fulfill its potential.

#### **a) Leadership focused on purpose and priorities**

A primary leadership and management task that should be accomplished includes defining a clear mission and purpose for the OSU South Centers and establishing core priorities. Respondents are uncertain about the research priorities, Extension program priorities, and audiences to be served. It was suggested that the OSU South Centers priorities be aligned with CFAES priorities. Confusion also exists about the geographic reach of the OSU South Centers, including whether it serves the Southern Ohio region or whether it serves the entire State of Ohio or audiences outside of Ohio.

#### *Examples*

- *“It is not clear how stakeholder needs are determined. Perhaps the process is already adequate but if not it should be enhanced.”*
- *“Stronger, more directed leadership for South Centers.”*
- *“I think good things are coming out of this location, but I don’t have any idea why they exist.”*
- *“They do good work. Is it all relevant to Ohio or just Southern Ohio? Who’s their audience?”*
- *“Make it a state center instead of a regional center. They supposedly focus on their region, but then they try to handle statewide issues. Very confusing.”*
- *“Keep South Centers relevant. Keep the southern Ohio presence, but update it.”*
- *“It should be a state of the art regional hub for specialty crops, aquaculture, and small business resources. Showcasing some of the most up-to-date technologies available.”*
- *“Continue to be a proactive resource to communities in southern Ohio by providing learning opportunities and research data to improve productivity and profitability for small farms, vegetable producers, specialty crop producers, and aquaculture.”*

- *“Become a leader in aquaculture Extension work in NC region.”*
- *“Expand the soil, water, and bioenergy program to include pilot projects for scaling bioenergy solutions, such as biogas or biofuel production from agricultural residues, to promote sustainable energy in rural communities.”*
- *“Engage with Ohio’s nursery and landscape industry.”*
- *“Break out of its rustic persona to provide greater outreach to urban centers.”*
- *“Synergies: Combine the Endeavor Center with the Business Development Network to create a streamlined “one-stop shop” for small business and agricultural startups. Offer tailored programs for cooperatives, aquaculture businesses, and specialty crop producers to develop business plans, secure funding, and scale operations.”*
- *“Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Launch programs targeting younger generations to cultivate interest in agriculture and business, offering mentorship, hands-on projects (e.g., aquaponics), and access to the recording studio for marketing and storytelling.”*
- *“By communicating more, engaging with the communities more, and offering competitive workforce development, it could be an area that grows the CFAES community.”*
- *“Change center name to something more unique and mission oriented.”*

#### **b) Administrative alignment**

Concerns and confusion were expressed about the reporting lines of OSU South Centers to Extension, research, and CFAES in general. At an Extension programmatic level, it was suggested that South Centers better aligned with core priorities to fulfill the land-grant mission. Closer alignment with Southern Ohio counties and Jackson County specifically was called for as well. In general, the need exists to better integrate OSU South Centers into the CFAES ecosystem that includes both research and Extension.

##### *Examples*

- *“Streamline reporting lines.”*
- *“Reclassify the staff at Coops and SBDC (business and cooperative development) as Extension educators. They are resources to ANR and CD folks across the state.”*

#### **c) Infrastructure and operational management**

Concerns were raised about the need for improved infrastructure at OSU South Centers, from small items such as light bulbs to large items such as greenhouses and solar systems.

##### *Examples*

- *“Set mission and vision driven policies to improve functional capacity of South Centers.”*
- *“Provide updated infrastructure budget.”*
- *“The business side of South Centers needs modernized for the 21st century.”*

## 2. Communications

The communication theme includes awareness, internal marketing, and external marketing. Respondents who were moderately to slightly familiar with OSU South Centers provided most of the comments about this theme. Some confusion exists about the mission and roles of OSU South Centers. Respondents questioned whether it is a regional center or a state center; the topic priority areas for both Extension and research; and what resources (including people and infrastructure) are available at that location. In general, there is a need for better marketing, advertising, and communication to both internal and external audiences.

### a) Internal audiences

Suggestions for increasing awareness among internal audiences included informational sessions at program area meetings, departmental meetings, the statewide Extension Conference; email updates about OSU South Centers work; hosting of additional in-service sessions at the facilities; OSU South Centers visits and presentations at other CFAES locations; and offering tours to Ohio State employees.

#### *Examples*

- *“Internal marketing and messaging – not a newsletter, needs to be real connections with the people doing the work and how it is relevant in our communities.”*
- *“It is a well-kept secret. I’ve worked for OSU Extension for 25 years and have hardly any knowledge about what they do.”*
- *“Communicate to all Extension staff the value of South Centers and all they offer.”*
- *“I know South Centers is doing great work, and I’ve probably used their research in my work, but on a day-to-day basis, I’m unfamiliar, or I haven’t found a need to interact with South Centers.”*
- *“Once a year, a professional development opportunity needs to be held with Extension (particularly southern Ohio counties) and South Centers to highlight work of each unit, but also promote and encourage working together.”*
- *“Help Extension faculty and staff across the state understand and engage with the expertise available from South Centers staff.”*

### b) External audiences

Suggestions for increasing awareness among external audiences included increased number of field days; social media posts; open houses; and increased collaboration with county educators and state specialists.

#### *Examples*

- *“Be more of a VISIBLE presence in the community.”*
- *“Update the website.”*
- *“Increase direct engagement with the citizens of Ohio.”*
- *“Extension office team members have strong working relationships with elected officials in their counties – utilize existing relationships.”*
- *“Involvement with advisory committee(s).”*
- *“South Centers needs to make itself, and the work it does, more visible to external stakeholders.”*

### **III. Conclusion**

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

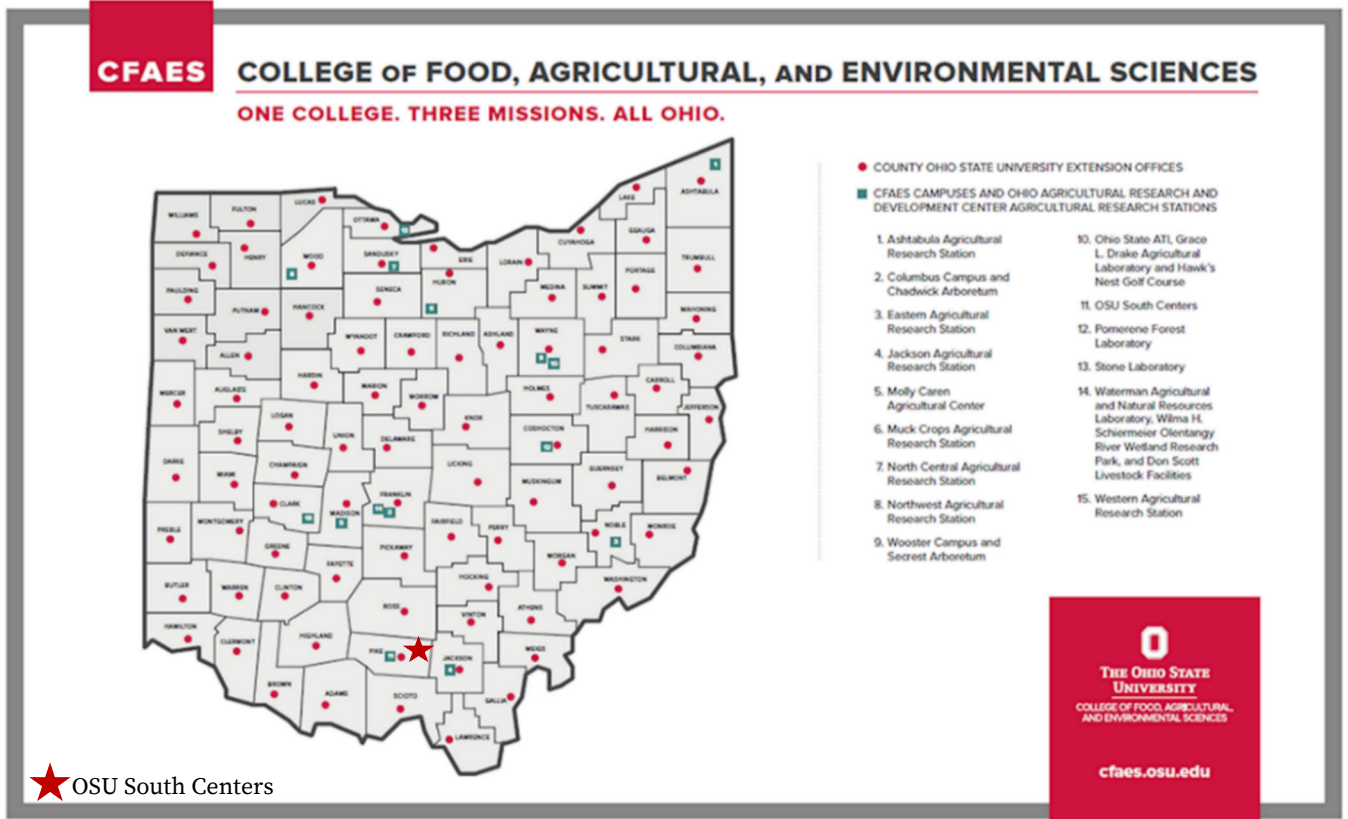
- Clarity of the purpose, audiences served, and geographic scope will provide direction for the OSU South Centers to guide decisions and prioritize actions moving forward.
- Integration with the college and collaboration with Ohio State colleagues should be a top priority.
- Operational improvements and clear reporting expectations will improve processes and impact reporting.

This crowdsourcing report is part of the OSU South Centers review and summarizes insights from internal audiences. For additional perspective, the self-study report authored by the OSU South Centers team provides a comprehensive document with the history, current context, and potential future direction. The review report from external reviewers focused on observations and recommendations based on visits with internal and external stakeholders.

## IV. Appendices

### Appendix A. CFAES Statewide Campus

The South Centers is part of Ohio State's College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Sciences which includes faculty and staff from diverse disciplines in Columbus, Wooster, and the statewide campus (Extension teams across Ohio's 88 counties and 11 research stations and field labs).



A [map of College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences Statewide Campus locations](#), including OSU South Centers denoted by a star in Piketon, Ohio.

#### CFAES departments represent a broad range of disciplines.

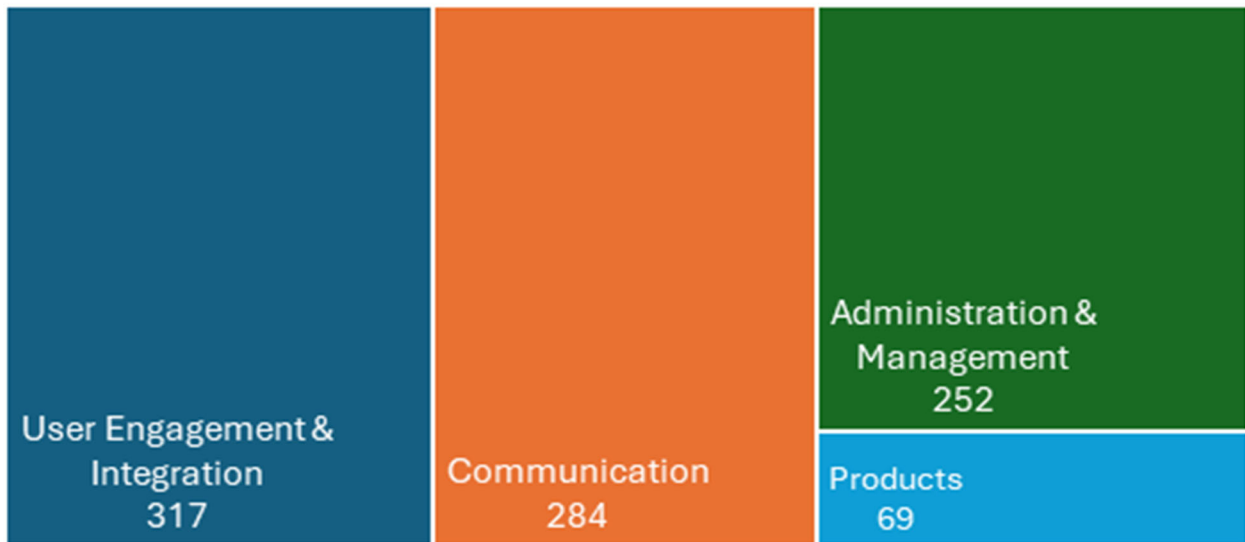
- Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership
- Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics
- Animal Sciences
- Entomology
- Department of Extension
- Food Science and Technology
- Food, Agricultural and Biological Engineering
- Horticulture and Crop Science
- Plant Pathology
- School of Environment and Natural Resources
- The Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute

## Appendix B. Coding Chart

The Table below represents the total number of comments received, sorted, and coded by major theme and by level of familiarity with the OSU South Centers. The tree map provides a visual representation to compare the number of comments received and coded by major theme.

	Extremely Familiar-Familiar	Moderate-Slightly Familiar	Unfamiliar	Total
User Engagement & Integration	108	194	15	317
Communication	66	197	21	284
Administration & Management	94	156	2	252
Products	31	38	0	69
<b>Total</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>922</b>

Major Thematic Codes Across All Familiarity Categories  
(n=922)



## Appendix C. References

- Doan, A., Ramakrishnan, R., & Halevy, A. Y. (2011). Crowdsourcing systems on the world-wide web. *Communications of the ACM*, 54(4), 86-96. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1924421.1924442>
- Doberneck, D. M., & Schweitzer, J. H. (2017). Disciplinary variations in publicly engaged scholarship: An analysis using the Biglan classification of academic disciplines. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 21(1), 78-103.
- Estellés-Arolas, E., & González-Ladrón-De-Guevara, F. (2012). Towards an integrated crowdsourcing definition. *Journal of Information science*, 38(2), 189-200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551512437638>
- Ghezzi, A., Gabelloni, D., Martini, A., & Natalicchio, A. (2018). Crowdsourcing: a review and suggestions for future research. *International Journal of management reviews*, 20(2), 343-363. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12135>
- Halonen, J. S., & Dunn, D. S. (2017). Avoiding the potholes of program review. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- McDowell, G. R. (2003). Engaged universities: Lessons from the land-grant universities and extension. *The annals of the American Academy of political and social science*, 585(1), 31-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716202238565>
- Merriam-Webster (2014). Online dictionary. Retrieved from: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crowdsourcing>
- Raison, B., Fox, J. M., & D'Adamo-Damery, P. (2014). Crowdsourcing eXtension: Communities of Practice provide rapid response. *Journal of Extension*, 52(6). <https://doi.org/10.34068/joe.52.06.32>

***Crowdsourcing welcomes idea generation  
from a wide group of individuals  
to contribute to innovation  
and value creation***

(Ghezzi, Gabelloni, Martini, & Natalicchio, 2018).