



## Impact Statement

**Project Title:** *A Survey of the Organizational Capacity of 1890 Cooperative Extension*

**Issue:** Cooperative Extension proudly celebrated 100 years of its existence in 2014. This rich history can be summed up through the millions of 4-H youth, farmers, families, and communities that have been impacted by the educational programs that have helped them to improve their lives, lands, and economies.

Throughout this time, the nation has continually changed. The population has increased and shifted from rural to urban areas, new technologies have changed the way we operate, and the needs and issues of the audiences we serve have changed. As the system has navigated these changes, it has also had to deal with rising operating costs and dwindling financial resources. To remain viable and relevant, Cooperative Extension has had to adapt to these changes; and as a result, many states have undergone reorganization. Even though Cooperative Extension is a national system and there are similarities among the individual organizations, there is no one size fits all national model.

Given the differences of each organization and its structure, (i.e. funding, etc.), it's difficult to determine the capacity of each organization. These differences are even more widely pronounced for 1890 Cooperative Extension organizations that have always operated with significantly less funding than their 1862 sister institutions. This makes it challenging to advocate on behalf of other institutions and form partnerships with institutions without knowing how each operates.

The purpose of this survey is to collect data that describes the individual, organizational capacity of each of the 19 land-grant institutions within the 1890 Cooperative Extension System.

### **What has been done:**

The initial survey plan was developed based on my observations as a new Extension Administrator. It became evident in my conversations with colleagues that each institution operated vastly different at both the state and county levels. For each of us to be a more effective advocate for other institutions and to identify opportunities to partners with each other, I felt it was essential to learn more about the operations of each. Based on my discussions, no prior surveys of this nature had been conducted. Many expressed that they believed that this information would be beneficial to the system. Additionally, I consulted with the Executive Director for the 1890 Association of Extension Administrators (AEA) to gather feedback before finalizing the survey.

The brief survey was developed using Qualtrics, web-based survey software. The survey was sent to all 1890 Extension Administrators and leadership of the 19 institutions. The respondents had one week to respond to the survey. Eleven of the 19 (58%) institutions responded to the survey, and on average it took the respondents 45 minutes to complete the survey. The data from the survey will be compiled and shared with the AEA.

**Impacts/New Partnerships:**

The anticipated impact of this project includes an enhanced understanding of the institutional and system-wide capacity, along with the development of more collaborative partnerships within the 1890 Cooperative Extension System. These new collaborations may involve program development and multi-state grant proposals/awards with the overall goal of increasing both the individual institution and system-wide outreach to impact the livelihood of small farmers and limited resource audiences.

**Outcome of Project (societal impact/measure of increased quality of life)**

The results of the survey of the Organizational Capacity of 1890 Cooperative Extension will help to:

- provide an improved understanding of the 1890 Cooperative Extension System and its overall capacity
- aid in the identification of partnership opportunities that will strengthen programming and outreach for limited resource communities
- aid in the identification of partnership opportunities for multistate grant funding and applied research projects
- improve the knowledge of members of the 1890 community, so they are better informed to serve as advocates or representatives when serving on regional and national/federal committee(s).

**How has your project been aided by your FSLI experience?**

This project was beneficial to the FSLI experience because it helped me learn more about the 1890 Cooperative Extension System. My knowledge of 1890 Cooperative Extension is limited to the past seven years since I spent the majority of my career with an 1862 Institution in a state with one land-grant university.

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