

# UC ANR – Ensuring Relevance in a Changing World

## The driver for change. Relevance and Funding.

Both in society and in UC, “(Cooperative) Extension often appears as an afterthought.” This lack of awareness along with the perception of limited relevance has seen a continued decline in Federal, State and UC funding.

A recent article in [AgFax](https://agfax.com/2018/08/24/cooperative-extension-challenges-funding-and-remaining-relevant/) talked about the decline in CE funding and stated ***“Concerns about agricultural research and extension include those about the appropriate levels of funding, as well as relevance to current and future constituencies.”***

***Healthy organizations reflect on how they can adjust to better meet current and emerging needs.***

Many other reports and studies have highlighted the need for CE to consider the evolving needs of society and the associated need for CE to step back and re-evaluate its roles and focus. As a result, a number of changes have already emerged – e.g., the development of urban focused programs in many states, the growth in non-traditional areas such as fire response, urban forestry and urban IPM, etc..

## What’s different now?

If we use California as an example, 95% of the population live in urban areas. This compares to 48% when CE started in 1914. Given the traditional focus on rural populations and rural areas, many within and outside UC ANR are not aware that these urban populations are equally a part of our mandated audience (i.e., we were established to help all Californians).

## Options

If we are committed to meeting the needs of our communities, and to reducing the ongoing reduction in funding, we need to assess needs and consider what might or should CE look like in the future? How might we partner within the state, regionally and nationally? How might we position ourselves to meet our mandate and so continue and expand a history of impact in communities?

Note: Exploring options is not saying there is a need to throw out the old to accommodate the new. Rather, it does mean - as a science-based organization - we should be stepping back, considering the needs of all our clients and then assessing how and if we can play new and evolving roles to meet the needs of Californians.

## Operational modes

In exploring new modes of operation, we can look at three areas 1) what we focus on, 2) how we collaborate and 3) how we deliver. For example:

* **New areas of focus.** What are the areas of emerging need that are consistent with our mandate and areas of UC expertise where we can make significant contributions? We need to especially consider urban, DEI and other such newer areas that communities care about and are prepared to support. In this respect, we have seen new areas emerge that people are prepared to fully or significantly fund (e.g., Department of conservation; community food safety, urban IPM, etc.).
* **New ways of working.** How might organizations consolidate and collaborate to meet needs on a regional or national basis. Examples of such shifts in operation already seen include 1) the consolidation in the Midwest to meet Poultry needs, and 2) the Pesticide safety programs of the Pacific North West who consolidated to address and meet pest management needs across 3 states.
* **Central clearing house.** While recognizing that some elements are location specific, a lot of information has broad application and could be shared through more centralized clearing houses. These central repositories could be “stocked” through wider content sharing. Such broad access already happens with sites like UC IPM which sees state, national and international users. As we think ahead, eXtension might be ready to play a larger role in this.

## Overcoming Barriers to Recovery | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental IllnessConsiderations

As we explore new or evolving operational modes, factors to consider include:

* How get people supportive of this exploration?
  + Perhaps design and lead a large initiative.
  + Understand the incentives and drivers to engage and try change and innovation (e.g., Survival)?
* Where is the value-add in any partnering and what might that look like.

***People should be encouraged to question while also being encouraged to dream “What might be…?”***

* + Note: not new - multi-state projects already exist.
  + e.g., Shared positions or positions placed elsewhere
  + Shared information – e.g., multi partners each add an element - these sites could still offer Certification.
* What’s our comparative advantage or sources of alternate supply
  + i.e., what are we best positioned to do? e.g., might our RECs meet an emerging need; What do others have? Is there a Needs Assessment for urban needs?
* What can be learned from other states and national efforts?
  + e.g., How tie in with or tap the national ECOP focus on DEI and Urban
  + (How tap other areas (even non US) that might be logical partners?)

## Barriers to Change

* Change can be hard. (People should be encouraged to question while also being encouraged to dream “What might be…?”.
* It is common for people to see themselves at the center – as the best. This can get in the way of looking for opportunities.
* People may not want to “give up” content generation. (Perceived) local need?
* Help people see sharing (building bigger teams) across states or organizations is an opportunity and not something to be threatened by. Note: Such collaboration can still involve a range of innovations.

## Next steps

* **Water panel** - David Lewis is exploring water and DEI with his panel
* **Understand needs** - Lynn to tap Keith N to see if some form of needs assessment and suggested actions exists.
* **Engage panels** - All how could UC ANR best position programs and activities to better meet urban needs (DEI). (Down the road consider setting RFP style goals.)
* **Urban focused centers and programs.** Wendy and Mark. Find out what else exists (Wendy mentioned WCMER (Western Center for urban needs) NUEL). What are they doing what can we learn or how might we engage with them.
* Please share other ideas you have??