

# Informing the Strategic Priorities of Extension: A Community Engagement Strategy



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Purdue University

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Community Development Society  
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# A Brief Overview



- Dean of the College of Agriculture launched a new five-year strategic planning effort in Fall 2014.
- Extension wanted to weigh in on the substance of that plan. Opted to seek input and advice from stakeholders across the state.
- The most critical question at that point: “What process would we employ to capture the insights of Indiana residents?”
- Decided to embrace a series of community forums across the state.

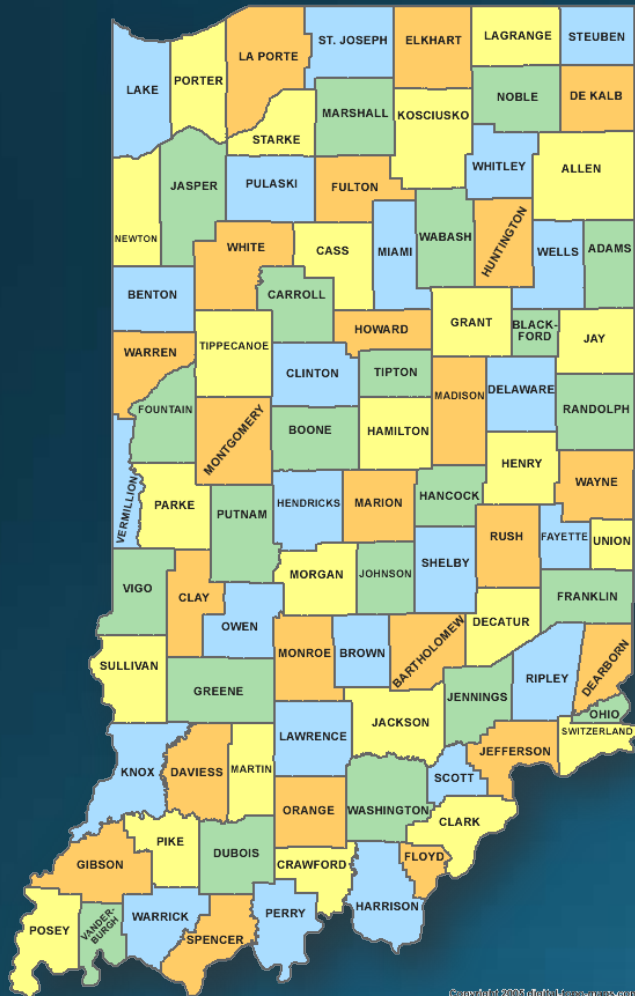
# The Steps



College of Agriculture



# 1. Location of Forums



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- Five Extension Districts in Indiana
- District Directors asked to Recommend Four Sites in their Districts
- Opted to have one additional forum in the Indianapolis area, the largest city in the state
- End result – plans to host 21 Extension forums
- This complemented the 6 listening sessions hosted by the Dean of Agriculture in 6 urban sites.



# Map of the 21 Community Forum Locations

## 2. Forum Methodology

- Employed the World Café Format
- Four rounds over the course of the meeting
- People asked rotate to different tables for 3 of the 4 rounds
- Highly interactive process



### 3. Who to Invite

“We have named these ‘Community Forums’ for a reason. They should fairly represent your community. When thinking about whom to invite, consider a diverse reflection of those who call your area home. This means a healthy blend of current core stakeholders **and** those who may have less experience with, or knowledge of, Purdue Extension. . . .”

Jason Henderson  
Director, Purdue Extension





## 4. Key Forum Roles



- Forum Facilitator
- Table Facilitator
- Table Recorder and Reporter
- Roundtable Participants

# 5. Getting Ready: Forum Facilitator Training



## PURDUE EXTENSION COMMUNITY FORUM

**Webinar Training**

Background  
Information  
for Meeting  
Facilitators

# 6. Host Forums: Agenda at a Glance

(held during the January-March 2015 period)

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Purpose of the Community Forum**

**Video of Jason Henderson, Director of Purdue  
Extension**

**Overview of the Forum Format**

**The Four Roundtable Sessions**

**Closing Comments**

# The Roundtable Sessions

## Round 1

- Children, Youth & Families

## Round 2

- Digging Deeper into the Top Issues from Round 1

## Round 3

- Community, Economy, Agriculture & Natural Resources

## Round 4

- Digging Deeper into the Top Issues from Round 3

# 7. Communicate Results

## COMMUNITY FORUMS Statewide Feedback Report



Whenever an organization considers how to enhance and evolve, it must engage those whom it's their mission to serve. Nothing rivals firsthand, unfiltered responses to what you do well, what you can improve, and initiatives people want to see.

That's why we'd like to thank the nearly 800 of you who made time earlier this year to attend one of 21 Purdue Extension Community Forums or one of six Dean's Listening Sessions held throughout Indiana.

These gatherings helped Purdue Extension and Purdue University's College of Agriculture strengthen ties to current stakeholders, meet fresh faces to reach new audiences, and guide forthcoming five-year strategic plans for both Extension and the College of Agriculture. We asked for bold, blunt, and big, and you delivered. Your voice and vision are the soul of this document, which synthesizes the most common issues, action items, activities, and initiatives identified

statewide in the categories of **Children, Youth, and Family and Community, Economy, Agriculture, and Natural Resources**. You will also receive a timeline of the strategic planning work that we are continuing to pursue in the College of Agriculture and Purdue Extension. Our strategic plans, when finalized, will honor the important insights and exciting ideas captured during the course of the Community Forums and Listening Sessions.

Thanks to you, we will continue to strive to make Purdue Extension and the College of Agriculture a vibrant, responsive, and valuable resource to the people of Indiana, our nation, and our world.

Sincerely,

**Jason Henderson**  
Director of Purdue Extension  
Associate Dean, Purdue University College of Agriculture

**The Community Forums and Dean's Listening Sessions were held in 27 sites across Indiana and gathered the insights of nearly 800 residents.**

- Albion
- Aurora
- Bloomington
- Bluffton
- Boonville
- Cambridge City
- Columbus
- Corydon
- Crown Point
- Danville
- Evansville
- Fort Wayne
- Franklin
- Greensburg
- Greentown
- Indianapolis (2)
- Lafayette
- Montgomery
- Muncie
- Nappanee
- Noblesville
- Rensselaer
- Rochester
- Seymour
- Terra Haute
- Valparaiso



Check out the back page of this report to see who took part in the Community Forums.

■ Dean's Listening Sessions  
● Community Forums

## Children, Youth & Family

## Community, Economy, Agriculture & Natural Resources

### TWO POWERFUL, OVERARCHING THEMES EMERGED

#### 1 Education for all ages

#### 2 Enhancing the quality of life

### TOP FIVE PRIORITY ISSUES & ACTION ITEMS



#### Strengthening Families

- Establish a firm, positive sense of communication and connectedness.
- Encourage families to make time for meals and activities together.
- Promote the benefits of family engagement and family stability.
- Ensure that entire families understand the economics involved in supporting themselves.



#### Promoting Healthy Living

Reiterate and reinforce the importance of healthy living through education that addresses:

- Physical wellness
- Proper nutrition
- Mental wellbeing
- The importance of hygiene



#### Building Effective Parenting Skills

- Teach youth about the importance of responsibility and a strong work ethic.
- Provide education in a wide range of parenting skills, including:
  - Strong family communication
  - Help to reinforce children and family goals
  - Child care
  - Budgeting for healthy home nutrition
  - How to be an effective role model



#### Enhancing Positive Life Skills

Provide education that facilitates:

- Conflict resolution
- Respect
- Decision-making
- Strong work ethic
- The importance of leadership
- Role modeling
- Mentoring



#### Supporting Career Preparation

- Equip and empower teenagers for life after high school.
- Emphasize the importance of vocational skills and help all ages prepare for those skills.
- Offer education for all ages on successfully finding jobs by addressing applications, resumés, and interviews.
- Assert the value of entrepreneurship and facilitate it through education wherever possible.
- Educate all ages on how to facilitate, and leverage, finances for education.

*These forums and sessions helped Purdue Extension and the College of Agriculture strengthen ties to current stakeholders, meet fresh faces to reach new audiences, and guide forthcoming five-year strategic plans for both Extension and the College.*

### TOP FIVE PRIORITY ISSUES & ACTION ITEMS



#### Strengthening Workforce, Business, and Economic Development

- Convey a continuum of the economic system — from employees to employers to the economy.
- Enhance job readiness skills such as soft skills, resumé writing, landing the job, and work ethic.
- Strengthen workforce development opportunities, such as occupational training and talent retention.
- Foster opportunities for local business development and entrepreneurship.



#### Expanding Agriculture-Related Opportunities

- Create programs that help improve the public's perception of agriculture.
- Embrace opportunities in diversified agriculture, such as sustainability, new crops, urban agriculture, local foods systems, small farms, beginning farmers, and agritourism.
- Continue and expand farm succession planning efforts.



#### Fostering Responsible Land Use and Conservation of Resources

- Improve education in zoning regulations and ordinances to enhance community understanding.
- Boost awareness of natural resources and how they relate to conservation and the environment.
- Create programs to help maintain or improve soil health and the quality and availability of water resources.



#### Creating Quality Communities

- Design and deliver educational programs that emphasize the importance of quality places.
- Focus on necessary infrastructure for quality places, such as trails, recreation, healthcare, roads, and policy options.



#### Increasing Civic Participation and Local Government Education

- Build strong partnerships to advance civic engagement, community pride, community collaboration, and leadership development.
- Design educational programs that address property taxes, government regulations, and government finances.

### PURDUE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES / INITIATIVES TO CONSIDER

- Establish new programs — or strengthen existing programs — to encourage mentoring, internships, apprenticeships, and role modeling.
- Create a series of classes, workshops, or other education outlets to specifically address these issues — whether at group or individual levels of instruction.
- Actively pursue collaborative partnerships with agencies, businesses, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations to bring communities together and make programs available to all who need them.
- Encourage and equip residents with skills and techniques so they can advocate for systems or policy changes within their communities.

- Enhance marketing and communications efforts so the public is aware of new or existing programs.

### PURDUE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES / INITIATIVES TO CONSIDER

- Focus on the tools or skills communities need to acquire resources (e.g., grant-writing programs).
- Create tools that address career exploration and mentoring.
- Partner with agencies, businesses, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations.
- Encourage networking and connecting people to resources and resource centers.
- Bolster social media presence to connect more consistently, naturally, and consistently with clientele.
- Facilitate community forums to encourage public deliberation on these issues.
- Leverage existing Extension programs (i.e., Master Gardeners or 4-H) in ways that address these issues.
- Pursue a role in incubating innovations and create / expand programs on marketing.
- Promote field trips and tours related to both agriculture and jobs / economic opportunity.
- Look beyond Purdue University's colleges of Agriculture, Health & Human Sciences, and Veterinary Medicine to connect more broadly — and as strongly — with additional Purdue University partners.

# What's Ahead?



- Extension Leadership Team will generate key subject matter topics under each of the 10 priorities (up to five).
- Extension specialists/educators will then weigh in.
- Annual Extension Conference: Major focus will be on the 10 forum themes and 5 subject matter topics. Participants will select TWO areas under each theme to launch in the next 1-2 years. Other priorities to be undertaken in the future
- Broad-based teams will be organized by these subject matter topics. Funds will be provided to support their work on these priorities.

# Thank You

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