



Extension

Strategic Plan 2016 - 2021



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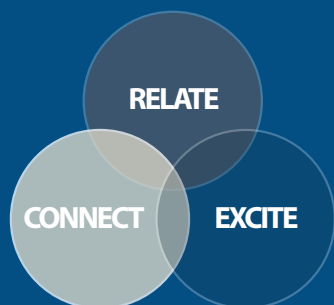


EXCITE

An Enterprising Approach for the
University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension

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Letter from the Dean and Director

Dear UNH Cooperative Extension Staff and Supporters,

Growing is important to us. Whether it is growing the highest yielding crops, the most resilient natural resources, the strongest local economies or the best young leaders, Cooperative Extension has been a “growing” champion for more than 100 years. At our core, we know that thoughtful growth is needed to move the people and communities of New Hampshire forward in an ever-changing world.

To that end, I am pleased to present the 2016 Strategic Plan that marks a new era in our growth as a premier service organization. As many of you know, it has been five years since Cooperative Extension last underwent a strategic planning process. At the time, we had to make critical changes to ensure our survival. Now, our plan is not about surviving. It’s about growing into a 21st century organization that is relevant, technologically savvy and committed to its core values and mission.

Last fall, over 120 staff, volunteers and community partners came together to envision Cooperative Extension’s future. From that process, we defined three broad organizational goals, also called our brand pillars:

- Meet people where they are with relevant, high-quality programming;
- Bring people together to find practical solutions to the issues they care about; and
- Cultivate a team of innovative, energized and connected staff and volunteers.

These brand pillars, which anchor our strategic plan, will both influence Cooperative Extension’s investments in programming and capacity over the next five years and guide our program teams as they develop the collaborations and partnerships that move us forward.

It’s an exciting time for all of us as we work together to put this plan into action. Your success over the next five years will not only be a critical part of our organization’s success, it will also have a profound impact on the people, communities, businesses and natural resources of our great state.

Sincerely,

Kenneth J. La Valley, Ph.D.

Dean and Director



How to Use the Plan

The Strategic Plan is a critical guidance document that will influence our strategic investments in programming and capacity. The plan establishes our collective vision for the future of our organization, how we achieve that vision will be determined through collaborations and relationships across program teams, within areas of expertise and by partnerships with advisory councils, volunteers and external partners.

While the plan outlines the broad direction for Cooperative Extension, program teams must set specific goals and objectives they will use to move the organization forward.

Questions Addressed

In 2012, Cooperative Extension launched a major reorganization to create more targeted programs, increase efficiency and more effectively serve the people of New Hampshire. Since then, we have made enormous strides which made it possible today to ask not “How do we survive?” but rather, “How do we want to thrive?” To reach an answer, our strategic planning process began with these questions:

1. What do we need to do to remain vibrant and relevant in today’s world, both within the university and within the state?
2. Who do we need to reach?
3. What do we want to be known for?
4. What are the most transformational ways we can use technology to meet the needs of those we serve and increase our ability to work together efficiently and effectively?
5. How do we become the most widely known educational resource, instead of the New Hampshire’s best kept secret?
6. What do we need to do to continue to be an integral part of the university and an essential partner in advancing the priorities identified in the university’s strategic plan?
7. What kind of an organizational culture will we need to succeed?



The university’s vision for 2020¹ prioritizes:

- Interdisciplinary schools and academies.
- A learning centered environment for the 21st century that includes experiential learning, cutting edge technology and real world issues.
- Research, scholarship and creative activities with a special focus on civically engaged research.
- Leveraging UNH’s intellectual capital in ways that help make a meaningful difference in the lives of people across the state, the nation and world.
- Expanding and deepening UNH’s strategic partnerships by providing real value for citizens throughout their lifetimes.

Cooperative Extension has played a critical role in each of these areas for over one hundred years. The strategic priorities outlined in this document reflect our commitment to continuing this work and developing an even stronger partnership between the university and the people of New Hampshire.

Over the next five years, community members, students and faculty will see the university’s strategic priorities come to life as they interact with Cooperative Extension both on campus and throughout the state.



University's 2020 strategic priorities come to life as people interact with Cooperative Extension. From UNH's 2020 vision:

NH citizens will discover...

a wider range of "educational opportunities that attract non-traditional students."²

Employers will discover...

a stronger partner in creating the workforce they need "to enhance the future economic success of New Hampshire."³

Community leaders will discover...

a neutral convener to bring together diverse stakeholders to "help address social, health, ethical, and economic problems facing New Hampshire citizens."⁴

University students will discover...

expanded opportunities to participate in "experiential learning... field projects"⁸ and experience with "real-world issues and problems."⁵

Faculty will discover...

communities and communities of practice ready to partner with them to do "civically engaged research that melds teaching, research and outreach."⁶

And everyone will discover ...

that they can find information, connect with experts and learn from others and get hands on support – both in-person and through Cooperative Extension's use of "cutting-edge technology."⁷

Updated Mission & Vision

Part of the strategic planning process was the evolution of the UNH Cooperative Extension's mission and vision, setting the stage for a sharper focus on how we conduct our work.

Mission

UNH Cooperative Extension strengthens people and communities in New Hampshire by providing trusted knowledge, practical education and cooperative solutions.

Vision

For over 100 years, UNH Cooperative Extension's innovative, energetic and connected staff and volunteers have been developing and promoting contemporary, practical education to meet New Hampshire's needs.

As we look ahead to the next 100 years of service to New Hampshire's people and communities, we will build upon our productive and accomplished history in the following ways:

- We will keep our longstanding promise to meet people where they are by using effective technologies, online learning platforms and face-to-face interactions that match the ways people learn and engage, while continuing to provide the customized, in-person programming and assistance that is the hallmark of our services.
- We will forge new connections and relationships with people who are unaware or under-served by our programming, while bringing people with diverse perspectives, experiences and expertise together to find practical solutions to the issues they care about.
- We will rise to the new challenges facing our state, including the growing impacts of climate change and our aging population, while continuing to provide the expert resources and advice in established focus areas that so many rely on.

This vision meaningfully reflects our core values: passion for service, relationship-driven engagement, responsiveness, resourcefulness, effectiveness and community.



Brand Basics

Cooperative Extension’s strategic planning process relied heavily on defining the brand. Why? Because knowing how we want to be perceived guides our work and leads to the reputation we seek.

When building a brand it is essential that the people we serve experience uniform quality and credible information. If we fail to provide these basic functions, all other plans are doomed to fail.

Name vs. visual identity

We are UNH Cooperative Extension. Our name remains the same but our visual identity is updated. We’ve adopted a streamlined logo and approach to imagery that reflect the new brand pillars.

figure 1



figure 2



Terms Defined

Brand	The authentic “story” that is continually reinforced when people hear, see or experience Cooperative Extension.
Brand Pillar	A core theme of the brand.
Mission	A summary of Cooperative Extension’s aims and values.
Vision	An aspirational description of what Cooperative Extension wants to achieve.
Values	Cooperative Extension’s top priorities and core beliefs.
Visual identity	Logo, fonts, colors and images used by Cooperative Extension.

Many organizations have evolved their logo, but retained their business name. For example, the Ford Motor Company included its name in its 1903 logo, but dropped it in its modern form (figure 1).

UNH Cooperative Extension’s previous logo included the organization’s full name, but the updated visual identity omits it (figure 2).

A brand is not physical. It’s not a font, a color or a logo. It is what people expect of us when they walk into a county office, attend a program, search our website, sign up to be a volunteer or make a gift.

RELATE

Brand Pillar #1: Relate

Meet people where they are with relevant, high quality programming

Strategies

1. Ground our work in a deeper understanding of the changing needs of New Hampshire youth, families and communities and ensure that our programs are relevant, responsive and accessible.
2. Embrace digital technology as an essential tool for reaching, educating, engaging and connecting those we serve.⁹
3. Promote our professional development training and certification programs to workers seeking to advance their skills, professionals seeking to gain or maintain certification and employers seeking to build the workforce their businesses need to thrive.¹⁰



Why is this a priority?

Meeting people where they are has always been a core value for Cooperative Extension. It is the hallmark of how we do business and a major reason that people and communities have continued to turn to us for over 100 years.

We are living in a time of dramatic change. New Hampshire residents are more likely to live in towns and cities than on farms. They are able to access a world of expertise at the click of a button and connect with one another in ways that were unimaginable even 10 years ago. At the same time, some things have stayed the same. Communities and people of all ages are still hungry for practical, credible information and relationship-based education and programming. If anything, the desire for tailored information, human connection and trusted advisors has grown.

In order to remain a vibrant and relevant resource for the people of New Hampshire, it is essential that we redouble our commitment to meeting people where they are with high quality, relationship-based programs for today's world.

Cooperative Extension specialists work along side the people they serve and often are active members of many communities.

What does this mean for how we do our work?

Paying attention and listening carefully to what is changing and what is staying the same over time.

Over the next five years we will ground what we do in a solid understanding of where people live, what they need and how they want to access information and programming. This requires that we deepen our understanding of both the people who currently use our services and those who do not and that we then use this information to continuously improve our programming and expand our outreach.



Workforce development is in great demand and UNH Professional Education is positioned to be the flagship noncredit training program in the state.

RELATE

Cooperative Extension IT, in conjunction with programs such as the Stewardship Network, have developed registration and volunteer management forms that are responsive to mobile technology in response to the growing use of these technologies by New Hampshire citizens.

Fully embracing digital technology not only as a tool for disseminating information, but also as a gateway for deeper engagement.

To this end we will make it easy for people seeking information to find us on-line; use digital tools to help people connect with one another; and integrate digital technology as a way to support and enhance our programming. We recognize that this is not a case of either in-person or digital engagement, but rather a case of both face-to-face interactions and interactions that take advantage of digital resources. It is about using all of the tools now at our disposal to reach people in the ways that make sense to them.

Responding to New Hampshire's need for a robust workforce with a greatly expanded menu of professional development and training programs.

Bringing UNH Professional Education (formerly Professional Development & Training) under the Cooperative Extension umbrella has dramatically expanded what we have to offer. Our task now is to fully integrate these programs with our other certification and training programs and connect both with businesses and workers within each of our communities.

Potential Ways Staff Can Better Relate with Stakeholders

- Use volunteers to conduct programs in their own communities.
- Monitor social media trends and tailor programs and promotions to reflect current issues and concerns.
- Join social and service groups in communities where you work.
- Expand your social network and take time to talk with people outside your typical circles.



Community and Economic Development programs build an assessment process into it's engagement efforts working with community leaders committed to making positive change. This enables participants to understand the broader needs of the community.



True leaders are not born, they are grown. 4-H is a continuum of hands-on local, state and national opportunities that can be tailored to each youth that participates.

CONNECT

Brand Pillar #2: Connect

Bring people together to find practical solutions to the issues they care about

Strategies

1. Connect the people and resources of the University of New Hampshire with those of New Hampshire communities.
 - a. grow the number of meaningful relationships between university faculty, staff and students with the communities and communities of practice that can put their research into action; and
 - b. link current and prospective university students with the experiential learning opportunities they need to succeed in the workforce of tomorrow.¹¹
2. Bring groups with diverse perspectives, experiences and expertise together to identify shared goals and find realistic solutions to complicated problems.¹²
3. Bring Cooperative Extension's resources to light by communicating in clear, consistent ways what we have to offer and the impact these resources have on the well-being of New Hampshire's people, communities and environment.

Why is this a priority?

Cooperative Extension has a long history of bringing people together. We regularly convene and interact with farmers and foresters; gardeners and local food advocates; small business owners and state agencies; youth and families; and volunteers and corporate executives. As a part of the university, we have unique access to professors doing cutting edge research, students preparing to enter the workforce and teachers providing world class educational opportunities for traditional and non-traditional students alike.

These relationships make us keenly aware of the complexity of the challenges New Hampshire's residents, families, businesses and communities are facing. To successfully address these challenges, individuals and communities must come together to share expertise and resources, explore diverse perspectives and develop realistic and creative solutions. Cooperative Extension's network of relationships and our role as a trusted convener position us well to take a leadership role.




Extension Twilight meetings are good venues for learning about the latest agricultural research and they provide a place for people to learn from one another.



Discussing issues with our legislators is critical to informing our work and maintaining our partnerships with counties and the state.

CONNECT



Connecting local leaders with strategies and resources helps set the table for vibrant communities and strong economies.

What does this mean for how we do our work?

Linking university faculty, programs and resources with work done on the ground in local communities.


While we have always done this, we will now take a more systematic approach to building connections. We will convene people across sectors, communities and perspectives to address complex issues. Our partners count on us to serve as a neutral convener – able to bring people to the table and facilitate a civil, solution-focused and action-oriented conversation. This type of process builds trust and encourages the kind of citizen engagement that is essential to New Hampshire’s way of life.

Connecting students with experiential learning opportunities.

This work will take many forms including facilitating 4-H and STEM-related after school projects for youth; connecting a forestry student with a summer internship with a forester; coordinating a capstone project for a family studies major by connecting the student to a policy maker working to address issues facing families.

Clearly and consistently communicating who we are and what we offer.

In order for people to take advantage of what we have to offer, they have to know we exist and understand the broad range of information and programming we provide. Over the next five years we will develop a strong brand, consistent messaging and a comprehensive communications plan and use these to better connect with individuals and communities throughout the state.



Working closely with NH Sea Grant to conduct dune restoration with citizen scientists is an excellent example of connecting people with the local resources of the university.

Potential Ways Staff Can Better Connect with Stakeholders

- Seek partnerships with organizations that have not previously worked with Cooperative Extension.
- Participate in social media groups on specific topics related to your work.
- Share information from other organizations.
- Connect your work with university research.

EXCITE

Brand Pillar #3: Excite

Cultivate a team of innovative, energized and connected staff and volunteers

STRATEGIES

1. Foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship throughout Cooperative Extension.
2. Ensure Cooperative Extension staff and volunteers have the professional development opportunities, tools, time and encouragement they need to continuously develop their skills and to embrace change.
3. Provide opportunities for staff and volunteers to learn from one another and work together across programs.



Why is this a priority?

Our staff and volunteers are paramount in Cooperative Extension because they enable us to deliver our promised service. It is essential then, that we invest in them, develop their skills and energetically recruit talent to create a resilient, skilled workforce.

What does this mean for how we do our work?

Fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

In order for staff to respond to challenges with enthusiasm and creativity, embrace change and take an entrepreneurial approach to their work, we must foster an organizational culture that rewards and supports these attributes.

Meaningful and practical work that is also fun and exciting is critical to recruiting new volunteers and youth.

Supporting staff to embrace change and develop their skills.

We already have innovative, energized and connected staff and volunteers who are passionately committed to the people they serve and the mission and values of Cooperative Extension. Our challenge in the next five years is to further develop their entrepreneurial spirit and make sure staff have the support they need to do their best work and to take their skills to the next level.

Providing opportunities for staff and volunteers to work together across programs.

Our communities cannot thrive in isolation. Neither can our staff and volunteers. We must continually reach out to one another across geography and disciplines, sparking innovative thinking and delivering the knowledge and resources our communities need.

Potential Ways Staff Can Make Their Work Exciting to Stakeholders

- Take images that show motion instead of stills or landscapes.
- Be enthusiastic in your work, celebrate successes.



Through exciting and authentic opportunities to lead, 4-H teens move their communities towards clearer thinking, larger service and better living.

Notes

1. UNH in 2020, Version 2.0
2. UNH in 2020, Version 2.0 p. 16
3. UNH in 2020, Version 2.0 p. 16
4. UNH in 2020, Version 2.0 p. 16
5. UNH in 2020, Version 2.0 p. 12
6. UNH in 2020, Version 2.0 p. 13
7. UNH in 2020, Version 2.0 p. 14
8. UNH in 2020, Version 2.0 p. 12
9. Advances UNH Learning Centered Environment Initiative Step 2 a. Infuse cutting-edge technology into all research and learning endeavors.
10. Advances UNH Learning Centered Environment Initiative Step 1 d. More opportunities students in classrooms, laboratory, and field projects; Step 2 d. High-impact learning experiences; Step 2 e. Greater student access to STEM programs. Also UNH Partner for Life Initiative Step c. Future economic success of NH; Step e. Work with partners to address problems facing NH citizens; Step f. Educational opportunities that attract non-traditional students.
11. Advances UNH Partner for Life Initiative Step e. Work with partners to address problems facing NH citizens.
12. Advances UNH Partner for Life Initiative Step c. Future economic success of NH; Step e. Work with partners to address problems facing NH citizens; Step f. Educational opportunities that attract non-traditional students.

Resources

[Appendicies](#)

[Forums Summary](#)

[Strategic Planning Process and List of Participants](#)

[Stakeholder Forum Notes and Ripple Map](#)

[Staff Survey](#)

[UNH Faculty/Staff Feedback](#)

[UNH Brand Book](#)



Credits

Photos by Dave Kellam, Emily Lord, Rachel Maccini, David Moore, China Wong and Becky Zeiber.



UNH Cooperative Extension strengthens people and communities in New Hampshire by providing trusted knowledge, practical education and cooperative solutions.



Extension