

MAY 2019

# LEADING EDGE DIALOGUE SERIES

## NATIONAL URBAN EXTENSION CONFERENCE



### AUTHORS

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### ABOUT THE LEADING EDGE DIALOGUE WHITE PAPER SERIES

Leading Edge Dialogues (LED's) were six 90-minute interactive workshops held during the 2019 National Urban Extension Conference which explored critical issues facing our cities and our universities. Each LED consisted of a multi-sector panel presentation followed by a facilitated group discussion with all attendees. This paper captures both the presentations and the innovative discussion that followed for one of the LED's. Papers have been written for each of the LED's which focused on the following topics: Density, Youth Engagement, Preparing the Extension Workforce, Data and Policy, Fulfilling the Land Grant University Mission, and Smart Cities.

### PRESENTED BY



## REACHING TEN MILLION ENGAGED YOUTH WITH EXTENSION

### THE ISSUE

The Cooperative Extension system has a vision of reaching 10 million youth annually through the 4-H program by the year 2025. The goal is to create opportunities for more youth to access 4-H and benefit from positive youth development (PYD) programs that lead to improved economic prosperity and quality of life outcomes for the youth of our nation. The purpose of this LED session was to explore avenues for achieving this vision and gain insight about major areas to address to achieve success. Three overarching themes drove the panel discussion and resulting dialogue:

- Embracing the challenges and opportunities of diversity, equity and inclusion to ensure that 4-H reflects the shifting population dynamics of the nation.
- Overcoming barriers to participation and engagement that exist for many youth and communities.
- Developing an organizational culture that embraces change and innovation.

### GENERATING AND DELIBERATING

The panel presentations and resulting discussion were wide ranging with several key thematic areas emerging for continued conversation and action steps.

### ADDRESSING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH AND CHANGE

Participants raised the issue that for some audiences, there are real and perceived barriers to engaging with 4-H. Without more opportunity to dive deeper into this issue, it is difficult to pinpoint the barriers contributing to this concern. However, the following statements, pulled from the participant dialogue, point to potential key focus areas for the 4-H program to address in a more deliberate and systematic way.



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## PANELISTS

**Andy Turner**, 4-H Program Leader from Cornell University, shared the work of the Pathways initiative, a project of the ECOP 4-H Leadership Committee. The project identified 4-H and Extension leaders from 11 Land Grant Universities (LGU's) that have developed innovative new approaches to 4-H programming.

**Nia Imani Fields**, 4-H Program Leader from the University of Maryland, discussed the efforts of State 4-H Program Leaders to advance the goals of equity and inclusion in 4-H through the Access, Equity and Belonging committee. The project is building the resources, skills and organizational capacity needed at the staff level for Extension to achieve the 2025 growth vision and ensure that all 4-H youth have access to high quality positive youth development programming.

Facilitation provided by:



Issues • Innovation • Impact

A Part of the Cooperative Extension System

- The need for significant and intentional organizational efforts at all levels to demonstrate 4-H's **commitment to equity and inclusion**. Higher-level administrators must be engaged and on board for real change to occur.
- The importance of an active human resources strategy to **bring diverse staff** into the organization and provide ongoing support.
- The need for more direct conversations and professional development in the areas of **implicit bias**. We need intentional programs at the staff level that help people confront privilege and dismantle racism.

## PROMOTING INNOVATION IN 4-H

The importance of creating a culture that actively seeks new approaches, new markets, and encourages an innovation mindset was strongly evident in the discussion. Key sub-themes and recommendations include the following:

### SCHOOL-BASED OPPORTUNITIES

The potential for growth by shifting energy and resources towards school-based delivery, both in school and after school. Opportunities exist for approaching schools with a partnership vision to build programs that fit our mission and align with school-based needs, challenges, and emerging funding opportunities. A key question here is the potential for system learning and scaling of efforts by identifying and learning from existing successful 4-H school-based initiatives.

### EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES IN URBAN AGRICULTURE

Extension has expanded support for urban agriculture, both on the production and consumer side, and across the food system. Can we create intentional 4-H connections to these efforts? Building 4-H components that connect to and build from innovative Extension programs in the urban agriculture setting would likely bring new youth and communities into the program, and add value to existing efforts such as junior master gardener programming and STEAM initiatives.

### IDENTIFYING AND PROMOTING A 4-H VALUE PROPOSITION

The dialogue revealed significant support for the importance of creating a system-wide sense of purpose to guide program efforts and to focus efforts to communicate the impact of the program to stakeholders and funding partners.

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Core themes included:

- Identifying a national shared core purpose is critical. Positioning 4-H, with supportive research, as a vibrant and growing network that helps youth gain the social capital, skills and attitudes they need to overcome barriers and achieve higher levels of economic prosperity is a strong message.
- 4-H can be the key ingredient in many communities, supporting youth along the ladder of employment, college and career readiness. Many major challenges in communities relate directly to economic issues. Active partnerships with job creators, labor organizations and job placement providers are key.
- Embracing a core 4-H mission around PYD creates a strong value in the marketplace. We can serve as capacity builders, bringing our research-based PYD expertise to other organizations.

## ACTION

The resources being developed and compiled by the Access, Equity and Belonging Committee (AEBC) of the 4-H Program Leaders Working Group (PLWG) should be reviewed and supported at the LGU level. Sub-groups, or Champion Groups, have formed around key communities of interest, including; Incarcerated Youth, Immigrant and Refugee Youth, LGBTQ+, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Youth Experiencing Homelessness, Youth in Foster Care, Youth with Disabilities, Youth Living in Poverty, and Racial and Ethnic Youth communities. Individual LGU's will need to develop their own state level organizational change processes, building off of the national efforts in innovation and diversity, equity and inclusion.

The 4-H Pathways Project, sponsored by the ECOP 4-H Leadership Committee, is an emerging change management process building on the work of emerging leaders and learning from their experiences in order to develop and initiate a systematic change management strategy for 4-H. The recommendations and findings from the first phase of the project are providing the foundation for an innovation and organizational change Leadership Institute, planned for the summer of 2020. The Institute will utilize case studies to support teams of 4-H, Extension and LGU leaders in the development of strategies for creating sustainable change and growth in the 4-H program.

## PANELISTS CONT'D

**Eliza Hernandez**, Chief of Staff at National 4-H Council, shared the role 4-H Council plays to build the 4-H brand, engage effectively with the private sector, and grow the financial resources available to support 4-H. 4-H Council is helping Cooperative Extension define its 4-H value proposition, a key to increasing funding support from the public and private sector.

**Boyd Owens III**, Senior Extension Director at South Carolina State University, presented the important role the 1890 Land Grant Extension programs play in the implementation of the vision for growth and equity in 4-H. 1890 LGU's are actively engaged in many of the communities Extension must reach to expand the programs reach. Increased collaboration between 1890 and 1862 institutions is a necessary step for successful engagement with communities we need to reach and build long lasting, collaborative relationships.





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## "ACTION" RESOURCES (FROM PG. 3)

Compiled resources and recommendations by the **Access, Equity and Belonging Committee** (AEBC) of the 4-H Program Leaders Working Group can be found at <https://access-equity-belonging.extension.org/>

The narrative report from phase one of the **Pathways Project** is located <https://nys4-h.org/printable-materials> under White Papers and Info Sheets.

## ABOUT THE WESTERN CENTER FOR METROPOLITAN EXTENSION AND RESEARCH

The Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research (WCMER) is a multi-university collaboration established by the Western Extension Directors Association to increase the internal capacity of Western Extension programs to address metropolitan issues, and to elevate the stature and value of Cooperative Extension to external metropolitan audiences.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Leadership Development at the Local Level:

The dialogue suggests that there is significant support for system-level change process and leadership development. However, participants also recognize that State and National change efforts will require parallel local level efforts. Several themes emerged related to this issue of Extension's role in local leadership development.

- Participants cited the potential opportunities for shared learning and understanding that could arise through intentional efforts to bring urban and rural groups together. Extension has the potential to play a significant role in bridging the urban-rural divide.
- Participants highlighted the key role that local extension advisory boards play in promoting and embracing new ideas. Local extension advisory boards and key volunteers will need to be thoughtfully included in change management strategies and diversity, equity and inclusion work in order to ensure support for broad system initiatives.
- The decentralized nature of Extension means that significant change will require both grassroots initiatives and more top-down approaches.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATIONAL URBAN EXTENSION

NUEL presented a strategic analysis of urban Extension opportunities, and four common themes that emerge in the literature on the unique aspects of urban Extension, in The National Framework for Urban Extension (NUEL Steering Committee (NUEL): et al., 2015). The following section is aligned with these themes:

- **Positioning:** How Extension is positioned at the national, state, regional, and city levels
- **Programs:** How Extension addresses the multitude of issues and priorities in the city
- **Personnel:** How Extension attracts, develops, retains, and structures competent talent
- **Partnerships:** How Extension collaborates to leverage resources for collective impact

## POSITIONING

The 4-H Pathways Project recommends a significant shift in the way Extension thinks about program development and engagement with new audiences. The discussions among the 11 LGU's involved in the first phase





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of the project revealed a central principle of change; increased focus on the needs of the youth and families we are trying to reach. To achieve its goals for growth in the context of diversity, equity and inclusion and to contribute to economic mobility for youth, the 4-H system must become customer-driven. Core elements include the following:

- Flexible enough to adjust our approaches to accommodate the shifting demographics of youth, including changing needs and expectations. We must go beyond simply letting new audiences know we exist and would like to work with them and instead be willing to re-create programs from the ground up that will resonate with these communities.
- We must increase our use of tools and techniques that help us track and continuously adapt to new needs and evolving opportunities.
- A pathway is needed that would help the leadership triad of Universities, Extension and 4-H to transition from the current, more hierarchical model, in which programming is driven down to youth and families from central decisions and regulations, to one in which programming is driven by the needs of youth and families themselves.

## PROGRAMMING

There are examples of existing models for high-level youth development programming in urban areas that have the potential for replication and expansion. One example worth further consideration is the Teens as Teachers program delivery strategy utilized in multiple States with large urban centers, including New York and Illinois. The Teens as Teachers model allows youth ages 13-18 to learn core 4-H content in STEM, Healthy Living and other areas and share their knowledge with younger children. The Teens learn teaching and mentoring skills as well, positioning them to deliver a minimum of six sessions of progressive learning in schools and community settings. The process allows for both content and leadership development while helping youth become engaged community leaders.

## PARTNERSHIPS

NUEL represents a vital networking and professional development framework for Extension. The Educators and Administrators attending this conference are in the process of building partnerships and collaborations with urban communities and organizations that may not have had any connection to

## ABOUT THE WCMER CONT'D

Since its founding in 2014 we have focused our efforts on applied research on best Extension practices and issues facing metropolitan areas, and professional development for Extension professionals, with a goal of better aligning programs and program delivery with the needs, issues and interest of their metropolitan constituency.

Institutional membership in the WCMER has increased from six founding university Extension members: (University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of California, Colorado State University, University of Idaho, Oregon State University, and Washington State University) to 11 in 2019 with the addition of University of Florida, Michigan State University, New Mexico State University, University of Nevada Reno, and The Ohio State University. This expanded membership has allowed us to broaden our collaborations and reach, and engage in new projects that advance the knowledge base of Extension work in our metropolitan regions.



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## ABOUT NUEL

National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) began in 2013 as a grass-roots effort of a group of passionate and committed urban Extension educators with the mission to advocate and advance the strategic importance and long-term value of urban Extension activities by being relevant locally, responsive statewide, and recognized nationally. NUEL is geared towards creating a network for collective impact currently with active participation from 23 states. NUEL is passionate and committed to moving urban Extension forward realizing each state in the Cooperative Extension System is different and may have diverse ideas and strategies for meeting urban needs.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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Extension previously. If 4-H is to be successful in achieving its vision for growth, significant leadership must come from the urban-based Extension educators.

In addition, the goal of engaging external partners and collaborators in the NUEL conference and dialogue sessions is an important one that should continue. The Extension story of the 21st century will be focused much more on collaboration and partnership and much less about the more hierarchical delivery of research-based knowledge from the University to the community. NUEL has the potential to play a leadership role in building more formal collaborative relationships, bringing Extension resources and personnel together with critical partners, such as the national Afterschool Alliance, for shared professional development, more formal partnership development, and collaborations around core, shared goals such as diversity, equity and inclusion.

## PERSONNEL

The 4-H Pathways Project, under the direction of the ECOP 4-H Leadership Committee, recommends a significant shift in the way Extension thinks about program development and engagement with new audiences. The discussions among the 11 LGU's involved in the first phase of the project revealed a central principle of change; increased focus on the needs of the youth and families we are trying to reach. To achieve its goals for growth in the context of diversity, equity and inclusion and to contribute to economic mobility for youth, the 4-H system must become customer-driven. Core elements include the following:

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