

MAY 2019

LEADING EDGE DIALOGUE SERIES

NATIONAL URBAN EXTENSION CONFERENCE

AUTHOR

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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



SMART CITIES: TECHNOLOGY EQUITY, LIVABILITY AND TRUST

THE ISSUE

Cities are getting smarter. New technologies help monitor traffic and enforce parking. First responders use camera systems to explore incident scenes for potentially hazardous materials or spills. Autonomous vehicles are being piloted. With these new technologies, governments and communities have concerns about safety, privacy, and equity. The key to successfully navigating these issues is trust.

Building trust has never been more vital, nor more vexing than it is today. In this session we carried on a robust and enlightening discussion on the challenges of gaining the trust of an increasingly skeptical citizenry and the role Extension can play in bridging the gap between technological progress and public trust in our smart cities.

Urbanova, a multi-sector collaboration in Spokane, WA, measures successful outcomes by the metrics of: healthier citizens, safer neighborhoods, smarter infrastructure, a more sustainable environment, and a stronger economy. Urbanova has most recently been focused on multi-disciplinary projects centered on health and the built environment, safe and secure outdoor spaces and the affordability of basic household expenses - especially utilities. Projects and areas of emphasis described in this session were selected based on work completed by Urbanova and Gallup assessing both qualitative and quantitative data in Spokane's East Central Neighborhood in 2017 and 2018.

PANELISTS

Kim Zentz, WSU Director of Urban Innovation and CEO of Urbanova, described how Urbanova, a multi-sector collaboration in Spokane, WA, approaches its mission to find new ways to make communities better for people while seeking scalable and replicable solutions to urban challenges defined by the voice of the people with the lived-experience in the neighborhoods.

Kevin Sanders, Adjunct Professor of Marketing at Gonzaga University and Owner/Principal of Becoming Trusted, provided attendees a seminar on the current state of trust in the U.S. compared to the rest of the world, the basis for trust and effective strategies, and behaviors that can build and maintain trust in business, private and personal settings.

GROUP THOUGHTS ON 'TRUST'

"Change creates uncertainty, uncertainty creates risk, and risk requires trust."

"We now need to build more trust, more often with more people who are less willing and have less time."

THE ISSUE (CONT'D)

As measured by efforts such as the Edelman Trust Barometer, trust in government has fallen from 72% to 18% in just a couple of decades, and people do not trust business leaders or the media. In the past over 50% of us trusted others; now that trust has declined to 18% for millennials today.

The goal of this LED was to engage Extension professionals in a discussion that explores new ways for Extension to think about and act upon their role in the trusted relationships in the communities they serve.

GENERATING AND DELIBERATING

The work of the university, of Extension, and of the public and private sectors increasingly converge at the intersection between data and people. Industries and governments are embracing outcomes-based digital transformation quickly. This is a multidimensional and complex process that uses data and technology innovation to solve problems, enhance experiences, streamline processes and deliver value.

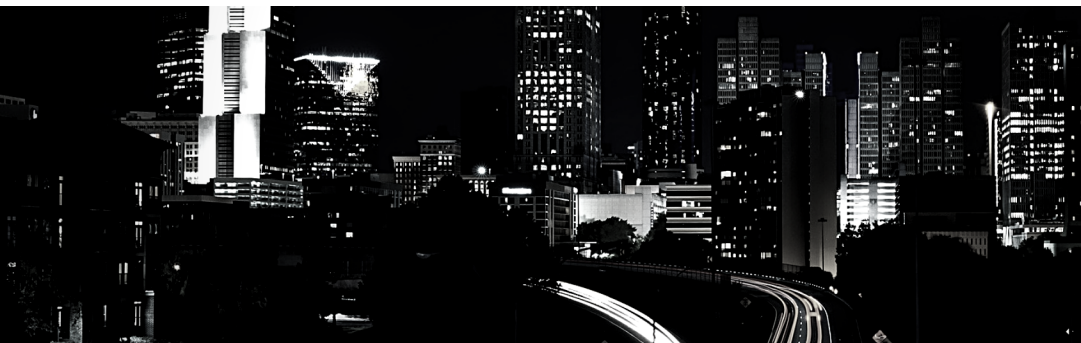
Some important questions:

- How do we give meaning to the data?
- How do we ensure privacy and guarantee security of personal information?
- As innovative approaches are employed, how do we mitigate any unintended negative consequences?
- How will the digital divide be bridged, particularly in rural and underserved communities?

Ultimately, Extension will only be successful in addressing these questions by working across traditional boundaries. The key to progress and success will be found in the quality of the trust relationships established between and among stakeholders.

Attendees agreed that the best approach in constructing such relationships is not to begin conversations with the data itself, but instead to find common ground that can be shared across sometimes divisive boundaries. People need to be seen as the solution; the focus cannot be on technology in search of a solution.

EQUITY, LIVABILITY AND TRUST



Generating shared understanding between people of different backgrounds and cultures and life experiences is key, and while the end result might not be actual agreement on specific issues, building concentric circles of trust where participants feel that they are heard is a win nonetheless, one that can be utilized as a foundation for future development.

Participants acknowledged that trust has now become fleeting; the trustworthiness of people and organizations is constantly re-evaluated. Extension's traditional approach -- based on many years of experience -- is to assume that their long history of building trusted relationships in the communities they serve is sufficient going forward. Unfortunately, this strategy is no longer successful in today's society; Extension personnel must be much more intentional about building trust with people -- work that is new in their experience.

In this session, all concurred that Extension's role revolved around helping to create synergy and advance solutions. Such an effort requires aiding people to see the value of listening to others, respecting different approaches, and committing to a mutual construction of an inclusive future. Both leaders at all levels and the land grant universities must be involved in this work if it is to succeed.

ACTION

Leaders at every level can commit to participating in a training shared experience where all can learn the state of trust, the mechanics of trust, the language of trust, and the strategies and techniques for building and maintaining trust in their relationships. Particular focus should be given to learning how to include the stakeholder groups that are most often silent or invisible in our work to make positive change.

Land grant universities can fully embrace with action and resources the "Extension Renaissance" (described by Stephen M. Gavazzi in his book: Land-Grant Universities for the Future - Higher Education for the Public Good). Extension is perfectly positioned to improve the translation of university research to application in our communities, towns and cities. Now is the time to be "land grant fierce!"



GROUP THOUGHTS ON 'TRUST' CONT'D

"Trust is comprised of sincerity and competence. People tend to overvalue competency when, in reality, sincerity wins every time."

GROUP THOUGHTS ON 'SINCERITY & RELATIONSHIPS'

"Sincerity is important, but cultural competency is essential"

"At the end of the day, your competence does not matter if people doubt your sincerity."

"Deep, trusting, cooperative relationships are the foundation for greater success with technological progress."

(Preceding quotes represent sentiment of group dialogue and are not attributed to any individual.)

ABOUT THE WESTERN CENTER FOR METROPOLITAN CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

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. 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.

SUGGESTIONS

Author Suggestions: Presently, county Extension office level work is far too invisible. I believe it is naturally trained to stay in its particular swim lane. County Extension should be encouraged to adopt a culture of constantly being the honest broker between first the university and the community, but also between the voices and stakeholders that are not traditionally at the table in discussions that are intended to broker change in the community. Staff should become expert in facilitation techniques, in active listening and story-telling. County Extension can be the bridge builders that move traditional outreach to “inreach” – meeting people where they are and bringing their perspective into the conversation to be heard, with equity and inclusion as core values.

LED Attendees Suggestions: Extension is already people-centric. Understanding how to build more trust with more people and with people who are increasingly less willing and who have less time will be crucial moving forward. CES must learn to build a common language and understanding between and among groups with disparate experiences. County level Extension can act to make intentions very clear and help all understand the “why” involved with every change. When an Extension employee observes innovation taking precedence over trust, the best strategy is to slow the conversation and insure that people’s voices are heard.

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).

EQUITY, LIVABILITY AND TRUST



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

Extension is already positioned as a trusted local provider. And by virtue of its distributed footprint, it is considered a bona fide member of the community. Author Steven M. Gavazzi offers the following “Formula for Harmonious Relationships:”

- “Greater Efficiency + Teaching/Engagement Excellence + Applied Research + Accessible/Affordable to all students + Community-Focused (vs rural/urban) + Closer to Home Impact = Greater ROI for public higher education.”

Extension could utilize its already well-honed ability to collaborate with its national network of Extension professionals to act in a mentor capacity to other organizations and groups, demonstrating how to adapt and scale solutions to best address the urban/metro population size and community scale issues.

PROGRAMMING

Extension programming should reflect the research strengths of the university they represent, which often aligns well with demonstrating sincerity and competency to communities. In addition, the research strengths of the university often resonate with those of the regional economy, frequently leading to a natural alignment of priorities for the communities served.

ABOUT THE WCMER CONT'D

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.

Facilitation provided by:



Issues • Innovation • Impact

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SMART CITIES: TECHNOLOGY EQUITY, LIVABILITY AND TRUST



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.

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FUNDING PROVIDED BY:



In terms of the programming so created, Extension might need to shift from a top-down approach to a convening and facilitating mindset. A good strategy would be to convene stakeholders first, listen to their input, assimilate the information shared, build consensus across the group concerning appropriate actions to address the issues so described, and then decide the proportion of educational content to use. Finally, work with stakeholders to choose certain forms of program delivery that all agree would serve community needs.

Extension could be the entity that teaches the community how to trust one another. Once a coalition of the willing is formed, Extension's role can be to remove roadblocks and to scout for resources.

PARTNERSHIPS

NUEL should work as a coalition to advocate for resources (cost and impact measures) that can most effectively address community and urban issues that have risen to national attention. Extension has access to tailored solutions to a broad swath of community situations. This knowledge coupled with a proven expertise in building trust where little existed prior to Extension's intervention can help identify and prioritize strategies that can be durably implemented across the country.

Partnerships forged with national scale private foundations, as well as organizations such as the United Way Worldwide, YMCA / YWCA, and many others can be a force multiplier for collective impact for all involved.

PERSONNEL

Extension work is unique and, as proposed here, likely to become increasingly more so. As such, human resource systems should be re-imagined in a way that is un-coupled from the metrics of the faculty, staff and administration of the research university. The dimensions of performance, attraction, development, retention and organizational structure should be developed based on the outcomes for which Extension is best positioned to facilitate, which are chosen and measured by the population served. Reward systems and metrics of performance evaluation should emphasize inputs from the community and urban climate in which Extension operates.