

MAY 2019

LEADING EDGE DIALOGUE SERIES

NATIONAL URBAN EXTENSION CONFERENCE



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PRESENTED BY:



EDITORS' INTRODUCTION TO THE LEADING EDGE DIALOGUE SERIES

OVERVIEW

For as long as we can remember, the National Urban Extension Conference has had both concurrent sessions for all attendees focused on Extension programming and best practices, and sessions for Extension leadership to look broadly and systemically at Extension's role in urban communities. Initially, the sessions for Extension leaders was a pre-conference and then became a track running throughout the conference. For the 2019 conference, hosted by Washington State University's Metropolitan Center for Applied Research and Extension, we reimagined this leadership track and created a series of 90-minute interactive workshops to explore critical issues facing our cities and our universities. These workshops, called Leading Edge Dialogues (LED), each consisted of a multi-sector panel presentation followed by a facilitated group discussion with all attendees designed to encourage thoughtful deliberation, generate new ideas, and create actionable steps for addressing the challenges and opportunities surrounding each topic.

The Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research (WCMER) led an effort to capture the conversations and learning from each LED into a set of individual position papers, authored by one or more panelists from each session. These six forward-looking papers reveal how Extension can step into unfamiliar spaces, address emerging issues, form new partnerships, and offer its capabilities and experience as a connector between municipalities and communities across cities, states, and regions.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

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. Papers have been written, capturing both the presentations and the innovative discussion that followed, for each of the LED's: Youth Engagement, Preparing the Extension Workforce, Data and Policy, Fulfilling the Land Grant University Mission, Smart Cities and Urban Green Infrastructure. All papers can be found at:

<https://metroextension.wsu.edu/2020/04/13/leading-edge-dialogue-series/>

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION TO THE



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.

OVERVIEW (CONT'D)

The topics we developed for the LED series fell into two groups -

Those relating to *how* Extension works in urban communities:

- Fulfilling the Land Grant University mission: Extension and community-based applied research;
- Reaching 10 million youth with Extension;
- Staffing: preparing the urban Extension workforce;

and *what* current or emerging societal issues, patterns or opportunities

Extension should be aware of:

- Data & policy: responding to human services needs;
- Smart cities: technology, equity, livability and trust; and
- Urban green infrastructure (UGI).

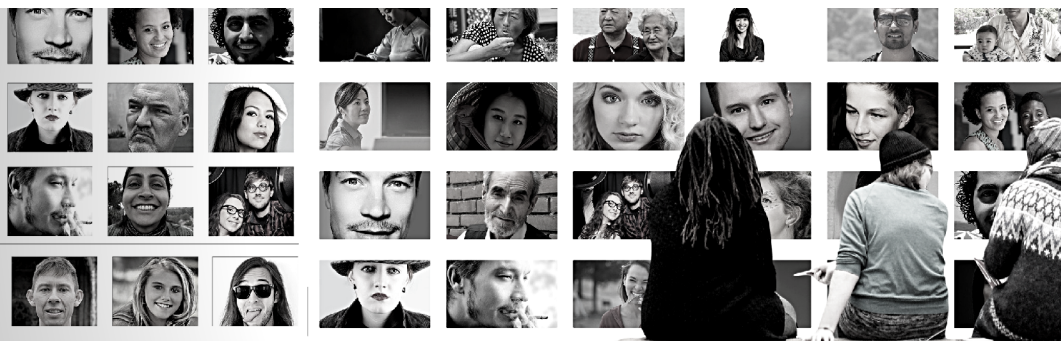
While there was intentionality in addressing both the *how* and *what*, there was also a purposeful attempt to fit these topics together as a whole, explicitly promoting inter- and multi-disciplinary work across established siloes within Extension. Additionally, this project proposed to build bridges between communities and cities, and amongst communities, research, and Extension.

Once we completed the papers, we recognized a number of themes that emerged in multiple LEDs: trust; inclusion and unity; partnership and collaboration; embracing a bottom-up model; building bridges between urban and rural; and the need for new funding mechanisms. Below, we detail the connectivity we discovered between and across the six papers. We hope you take the time to read these LEDs individually, considering how they address the chosen topic, while also reflecting on the patterns and connections amongst them. The complete collection can be found on the WCMER website at <https://metroextension.wsu.edu/2020/04/13/led/>.

TRUST

To build, maintain, and strengthen relationships requires trust, and the Smart City LED is all about how Extension can use the trust they've built across the decades to serve all stakeholders, both existing and new. It is not the knowledge, nor the research that builds trust, but the ability to meet with people and see them as who they are, meet them where they're at.

LEADING EDGE DIALOGUES



TRUST (CONT'D)

The importance of trust is represented in the following phrases from several LEDs:

- "The key to progress and success will be found in the quality of the trust relationships established between and among stakeholders." (Smart City LED)"
- "However, data and the tools to make it visible are useless without trust between the organization and the community. Trust is one of Extension's strongest assets, key to building bridges between policymakers and the people on the ground." (Data & Policy LED)
- "Extension can utilize the trust built across many years to bring community voices to the table, educating residents about green infrastructure's value and informing their involvement in the process of its construction." (UGI LED)
- "Expertise in urban issues as recognized by partners and people we serve." (Such recognition is trust by another name; Workforce LED)

Trust also is important in how we view and treat our staff and personnel – as an organization, how do we support and help develop the professional competencies they need to be successful in urban environments?

- "Have an inclusive work office culture that encourages employees to respect differences, specific traits, unique positions, and roles." (Workforce LED)
- "Inclusive community engagement and facilitation" (Workforce LED)
- "Social emotional intelligence and communications" (Workforce LED)

FOCUS ON INCLUSION AND UNITY

The 2019 National Urban Extension Conference, which was host to these LEDs, occurred prior to the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) conversations prompted by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) national movements and discussions of 2020. However, even before these events, it was clear to LED participants that the great challenges and opportunities facing Extension in urban communities revolve around the multiple dimensions of diversity (race, color, religion, gender identity, wealth, education, nationality, and more) and that this diversity touches all of society.

ABOUT THE WCIMER CONT'D

Institutional membership in the WCIMER 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. For more information visit: <https://metroextension.wsu.edu/>

Facilitation for the Leading Edge Dialogues was provided by:



A Part of the Cooperative Extension System

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Fulfilling the Land Grant University Mission: Extension and Community-Based Applied Research

Extension is a distinguishing characteristic of the land grant university. This paper explores Extension's shift into inter- and multi-disciplinary work across the university system; establishing Extension as a co-creative partner in community development and applied research; and methodologies to address urban-rural interdependence. Located at: <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2020/06/LGU-LED-6.1.pdf>

Staffing: Preparing the Urban Extension Workforce

Extension personnel in urban areas face unique challenges due to the urban context of scale, diversity, and complexity. The quest to attract, hire, develop, and retain competent personnel in the city requires new strategies. How do we address the unique workforce challenges of urban Extension? Located at: <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2021/01/Workforce-LED-1.19.21.pdf>

FOCUS ON INCLUSION AND UNITY CONT'D

While issues of difference are present and important in more rural communities, the magnitude and complexity of diversity in urban areas is truly unique and requires special attention from Extension:

- "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." (Smart City LED)
- "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." (Smart City LED)
- "With diverse constituencies in urban communities, how can university research as knowledge blend with community and indigenous knowledge?" (Workforce LED)
- "An 'expertise-driven' approach [compared to an 'expert-driven' approach] is much more appropriate for such tasks [e.g. co-creative collaborations], allowing indigenous and community knowledge to be considered side by side with university research-generated knowledge, without diminishing the value of either." (LGU LED)
- "Generating shared understanding between people of different backgrounds and cultures and life experiences is key." (Smart City LED)
- "Participants discussed how these tools provide an opportunity to reveal deeper truths about communities through a focus on social capital, while recognizing and resolving data gaps often related to minorities, women, and other overlooked groups." (Data & Policy LED)
- "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" (Youth LED)
- "While [the 2019 GI summit The Next Urban Giants] predated the equity, diversity, and inclusion discussions currently occurring in the United States, the summit addressed the importance of community engagement, equity, and gentrification related to building or maintaining green spaces in America's cities. (UGI LED)



FOCUS ON INCLUSION AND UNITY CONT'D

- "With regard to the current social movement to support and advance Black communities and environmental social justice, Extension can promote green infrastructure in neighborhoods which lack access to the environmental and public health benefits that green infrastructure can provide." (UGI LED)
- "Develop a diverse urban Extension workforce to meet the needs of diverse urban communities." (Workforce LED)

PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

The National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) recognized in their position paper ([A National Framework for Urban Extension](#)) that how and with whom Extension partners is a unique aspect of urban Extension. It is not surprising that partnerships and collaborations need to be built between Extension's internal and external constituents. Of equal importance is how Extension engages in those partnerships:

- "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" (Youth LED)
- "Panelists emphasized that establishing Extension as a co-creator with non-LGU public universities and other organizations, such as NGO's and city governments who also engage in community development and applied research, should be a priority." (LGU LED)
- "Participants considered applied research as a clear driver to move Extension forward in building collaborative relationships both within and outside the university setting." (LGU LED)
- "Extension has the expertise plus the ability to serve as a bridge between policymakers and communities." (Data & Policy LED)
- "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." (Smart City LED)
- "Extension can partner with cities in this work and build a niche as a leader in this field, heightening its visibility as a collaborator with municipalities and community organizations."

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Reaching 10 Million Engaged Youth through Extension

Extension 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 programs that lead to improved economic prosperity and quality of life outcomes for the youth of our nation. This paper explores avenues for achieving this vision and insights about major areas to address to achieve success.

Located at:

<https://metroextension.wsu.edu/2020/04/13/led/>

Smart Cities: Technology Equity, Livability, and Trust

Cities are getting smarter. New technologies help monitor traffic and enforce parking. First responders use camera systems to explore incident scenes for hazardous materials.

Autonomous vehicles are being piloted. These new technologies spark concerns about safety, privacy, and equity. The key to successfully navigating these issues is trust. What's the role of Extension in smart cities? Located at:

<https://metroextension.wsu.edu/2020/04/13/led/>

Photo: WA Stormwater Center

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Data and Policy: Responding to Human Services Needs

Skill in leveraging and presenting data is needed for decision-making, particularly around human services and community development. In the government human services sector there is a thirst for better data to legitimize and support social policy decisions, creating the potential for new partnerships between government agencies, and Extension. Located at: <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2020/07/Data-Policy-LED-7.16.pdf>

Urban Green Infrastructure Workshop

Cities understand the power of green infrastructure to create sustainable communities. Extension can partner with cities in this work, and build a niche as a leader in the field, by creating networks to support these partnerships through existing land-grant university-based structures. Located at: <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2020/10/LED-UGI-rev.-10.13.20.pdf>

PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION CONT'D

- "Personnel must be able to build meaningful relationships with a wide range of urban stakeholders so that Extension is positioned as a collaborator, not a competitor." (Workforce LED)

EMBRACING A BOTTOM-UP MODEL

Without a doubt, the strength of Extension is its presence in communities throughout the nation -- urban, rural, and suburban. This distributed workforce allows Extension to deliver programming across the country. The multi-jurisdiction, highly diverse, governmental- and non-governmental organization-rich complexity of urban communities creates a unique landscape for Extension, as detailed in the Western Extension Directors Association's [Extension In the Urban West](#) and NUEL's [A National Framework for Urban Extension](#).

This multi-scalar terrain creates highly unique sets of place-based issues, opportunities, partnerships, competition, and knowledge for Extension to navigate, both as an organization and as Extension professionals. To truly deliver on the land grant mission, urban Extension needs to excel at being locally relevant, and therefore, we need to bring the needs of our urban communities back to our universities to develop unique, place-based solutions:

- "An 'expertise-driven' approach [compared to an 'expert-driven' approach] is much more appropriate for such tasks [e.g. co-creative collaborations], allowing indigenous and community knowledge to be considered side by side with university research-generated knowledge, without diminishing the value of either." (LGU LED)
- "In terms of the programming so created [derived from the research strength of the university], Extension might need to shift from a top-down approach to a convening and facilitating mindset." (Smart City LED)
- "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." (Youth LED)
- "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." (Youth LED)

LEADING EDGE DIALOGUES



BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN URBAN & RURAL

Urban and rural communities are not siloed and isolated across the United States, but act rather as a continuum, linked together by shared workforces and economic interdependence; economic, social, and cultural connectivity; exposure to natural hazards; and complex and interdependent food, energy, and water systems. The national urban Extension 'movement' is not about creating or exacerbating a divide between urban and rural, but about highlighting unique challenges and opportunities for Extension in urban communities, while also recognizing and supporting the connections and continuum to rural America and leveraging the Cooperative Extension System:

- "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." (Youth LED)
- "Workforce development is key to the economic and social development of both urban and rural areas, and Extension can benefit both through carefully designed programming." (LGU LED)
- "How will the digital divide be bridged, particularly in rural and underserved communities?" (Smart City LED)
- "It is important to recognize that green infrastructure, while often considered an urban feature, is relevant to rural areas as well, although it may be understood and implemented differently." (UGI LED)

NEW FUNDING MECHANISMS ARE REQUIRED

USDA, Smith-Lever funds, and local government (e.g. county, parish) have always been the core funding sources for Extension. These sources of funding originated with the birth of Extension in 1918, when the majority of America lived in rural communities. And while these funds have allowed Extension to work in urban areas, the programmatic focus and methods have remained close to their historical roots. Additionally, the funding levels have not matched the growth in urban population overall. This has left urban Extension proportionately underfunded and understaffed. For Extension to realize its potential and future in urban areas new sources of funding will be required, and those cannot be allocated at the expense of other programs in Extension.

AUTHORS

Brad Gaolach, Ph.D., is the Director of Washington State University's Metropolitan Center for Applied Research & Extension and the Western Center for Metropolitan Extension & Research, and was the chair of the 2019 National Urban Extension Conference. Trained as population and community ecologist, he brings systems and sustainability based approaches to community-based applied research and education programs. He has conducted applied research and developed extension programs ranging from water quality, climate change, agriculture, food systems, and community and economic development.

Jody Norman, MCRP, is a sustainability writer with a master's degree in city and regional planning and a background in green infrastructure. She has worked on projects for Colorado State University Denver Extension and edited an urban Extension eFieldbook for eXtension as a NUEL fellow. She is currently the communications and outreach specialist for Gila Resources Information Project, an environmental nonprofit.

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AUTHORS CONT'D

Martha Aitken, BASW, is the Assistant Director for Washington State University's Metropolitan Center for Applied Research & Extension, and also supports operations for the Western Center for Metropolitan Extension & Research. She supervises the centers' diverse portfolio of local to national projects, and utilizes her previous experience in the non-profit and business sectors to build relationships with clients. She also facilitates workshops to help agencies, schools and non-profits address the needs of their limited income clients, and serves as a member of the NUEL Professional Development Action Team

NEW FUNDING MECHANISMS ARE REQUIRED CONT'D

- "[P]articipants suggested that Extension "think out of the box" when looking for urban Extension funding such as approaching the CDC, NIH, NSF, etc. about integrating Extension or applied research and practice into grant proposal parameters, and entrepreneurial models such as the WCMER." (LGU LED)
- "Construct a multi-part strategy to connect Hatch Act funding opportunities, Joint Council of Extension Professional (JCEP) organizations, and existing Extension-based conferences (e.g. on sustainability, energy, water, food systems, natural resources), with the goal of building an on-the-ground network of resources and partnerships." (UGI LED)
- "Deliberate concerning alignment opportunities with data resources. This process could elevate a number of possible funding." (Data & Policy LED)
- "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." (Youth LED)

In conclusion, with organizations like the WCMER and National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) supporting the increasing prominence of urban Extension in the last few years, there have been several position papers articulating the need, opportunities and challenges for Extension. We think the Leading Edge Dialogues and the associated position papers are valuable additions to this body of literature. With intentionality, they identify tangible actions Extension can take and NUEL can support in advancing Extension in urban communities.

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