

6-1-2017

A Strategic Plan for Introducing, Implementing, Managing, and Monitoring an Urban Extension Platform

Laura A. Warner
University of Florida

Charlie S. Vavrina
University of Florida

Mary L. Campbell
University of Florida

Monica L. Elliott
University of Florida

Robert J. Northrop
University of Florida

See next page for additional authors



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Recommended Citation

Warner, L. A., Vavrina, C. S., Campbell, M. L., Elliott, M. L., Northrop, R. J., & Place, N. T. (2017). A Strategic Plan for Introducing, Implementing, Managing, and Monitoring an Urban Extension Platform. *Journal of Extension*, 55(3), Article 22. <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol55/iss3/22>

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Extension* by an authorized editor of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.

A Strategic Plan for Introducing, Implementing, Managing, and Monitoring an Urban Extension Platform

Authors

Laura A. Warner, Charlie S. Vavrina, Mary L. Campbell, Monica L. Elliott, Robert J. Northrop, and Nick T. Place

A Strategic Plan for Introducing, Implementing, Managing, and Monitoring an Urban Extension Platform

Abstract

Florida's Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions reflects an adaptive management approach to the state's urban Extension mission within the context of establishing essential elements, performance indicators, key outcomes, and suggested alternatives for action. Extension leadership has adopted the strategic plan, and implementation efforts are under way. The successful future of urban Extension in Florida lies in fully embracing and monitoring the plan and recommendations therein. In this article, we describe the course of developing the strategic plan, which included the use of a modified Delphi process and a strategic adaptive management format. We encourage others to adapt our methods to develop plans to meet their specific needs and desired outcomes.

Laura A. Warner

Assistant Professor
University of Florida
Institute of Food and
Agricultural Sciences
Department of
Agricultural Education
and Communication
Gainesville, Florida
lsanagorski@ufl.edu

Charlie S. Vavrina

Professor Emeritus
University of Florida
Institute of Food and
Agricultural Sciences
Extension
Gainesville, Florida
bobcat4f@ufl.edu

Mary L. Campbell

County Extension
Director
University of Florida
Institute of Food and
Agricultural Sciences
Extension, Pinellas
County
Largo, Florida
marycamp@ufl.edu

Monica L. Elliott

Professor and Acting
Center Co-director
University of Florida
Institute of Food and
Agricultural Sciences
Fort Lauderdale
Research and
Education Center
Fort Lauderdale,
Florida
melliott@ufl.edu

Robert J. Northrop

Extension Forester
University of Florida
Institute of Food and
Agricultural Sciences
Extension,
Hillsborough County
Seffner, Florida
northrop@ufl.edu

Nick T. Place

Dean for Extension
and Director of the
Florida Cooperative
Extension Service
University of Florida
Institute of Food and
Agricultural Sciences
Extension
Gainesville, Florida
nplace@ufl.edu

Introduction

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of U.S. residents living in urbanized areas of 50,000 or more grew by more than 27.5 million people, a notable increase from 68.3% to 71.2% of the total population (Urban Area Criteria for the 2010 Census, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). As early as the 1980s, urban Extension clients were outnumbering their rural counterparts (Christenson & Warner, 1985), and this imbalance prevails today (Raison, 2014.) In 2011, Nelson-Smith queried, "Why isn't Extension more visible in the urban populations

that reside in our own backyards?" (para. 1).

Urban populations represent an untapped, incredibly important, and diverse sector of potential Extension clientele. Being unknown or inaccessible to urban audiences is a concern for Extension. Extension has been encouraged to meet the needs of the ever-growing urban population by "being open to changes in its programming and the methodology and approaches it uses to reach non-traditional populations" (Henning, Buchholz, Steele, & Ramaswamy, 2014, para. 10).

It is important to note that urban Extension and rural Extension are not separate systems. Urban Extension is often distinguished from traditional, or rural, Extension by its focus on issues-based programming, but it should not be considered a separate entity (Lamm, 1992; National Urban Extension Leaders, 2015). Extension must serve audiences of both types to uphold the land-grant mission. Moreover, as rural and urban communities are important and mutually interdependent, complex issues often affect clientele regardless of where they live (National Urban Extension Leaders, 2015).

Unique characteristics of and challenges to successful urban programming have been documented. For example, urban agricultural programs may need to provide support for navigating distinctive problems such as zoning issues and access to water management services (Oberholtzer, Dimitri, & Pressman, 2014). Extensive diversity in urban counties also adds complexity to programming (Webster & Ingram, 2007), and there is consensus that traditional programming strategies do not necessarily work in an urban context (Woodson, Lindner, & Lawver, 2008; Young & Vavrina, 2014). Successful urban Extension programs require training of personnel, new resources, comprehensive volunteer-development strategies, and the use of diverse team-based approaches that reach outside the traditional agricultural parts of colleges (Fehlis, 1992; Henning et al., 2014; Webster & Ingram, 2007; Young & Vavrina, 2014). Traditional thinking can be applied to the land-grant university's role in urban programming (e.g., "Increasingly, [urban farmers] can turn to institutions that have been serving farmers in rural areas for more than 150 years: land-grant colleges and universities" [Pipkin, 2015, para. 3]); however, tackling issue-oriented needs in urban settings remains the greatest opportunity for Extension to better serve urban audiences (Oberholtzer et al., 2014).

Florida's Commitment to Advancing the Science of Urban Extension

Florida has been growing at nearly twice the rate of the country overall (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Therefore, Florida Extension has undertaken an active planning process to identify and meet the needs of its growing urban population. This initiative was driven by a desire to establish in metropolitan regions a resilient and clearly recognizable urban Extension platform that addresses Florida's local critical issues.

The Process: Developing a Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions

The Florida dean for Extension arranged for an urban Extension task force to produce a plan for the integration of a more definitive urban approach into the existing Florida Extension system. We represent that task force. Due to the size of the state and participation from geographically distant Extension professionals, we employed a combination of remote electronic and in-person activities. Interested agents and specialists first convened at the Extension Professionals' Association of Florida annual meeting in August 2013. The meeting was characterized by discussion of the overall goals for the task force. These goals were to

- build an urban platform that is not a separate function but a seamless addition to the rest of Florida's

Extension programming;

- build an urban platform that strengthens Extension as a whole;
- build a more determined, directed, issues-oriented approach to urban Extension;
- develop guiding principles (best management practices) for urban Extension; and
- strengthen relations with urban county/city administrations.

As we discussed practical expectations for accomplishing these goals, difficulty in defining urban Extension emerged. When defining urban Extension became a barrier to progress, we opted to identify characteristics of the planning process for urban Extension instead. The characteristics we identified are as follows:

- A focus on why the strategic planning process was undertaken should be established.
- Programming should be based on issues not subject matter.
- Partnerships and collaborations should be established and maintained.
- Limited resources should be used responsibly.
- The land-grant mission should be upheld.

Several months later, in June 2014, we held an urban Extension conference to gather ideas from the larger group of Extension faculty working in urban centers. University of Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute graduates facilitated the working conference. The 47 attendees were members of the National Urban Extension Leaders group (National Urban Extension Leaders, 2015), county agents, state specialists, and administrators representing all subject matter areas and major urban regions. The objectives were to develop a framework and to identify strategies to move University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) urban Extension toward the best possible future by overcoming process constraints and emphasizing opportunities. The program included exploration of issues and development strategies from existing national urban Extension efforts, guided planning scenarios, brainstorming of strategies for achieving the desired future, and identification of next steps for maximizing productivity. Conference outcomes provided direction for the subsequent phases of task force work and resulted in four subcommittees that focused on (a) the urban Extension mission statement; (b) best management practices; (c) urban Extension centers, physical or virtual; and (d) urban Extension staffing. These subcommittees were charged with preparing reports that would be used in development of the strategic plan.

After establishing the mission, goals, and guiding principles for urban Extension, the task force compared those fundamentals to the existing 10-year Florida Extension Roadmap (University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension, 2013) and found them to be relevant and compatible. Our next major step was to develop a strategic plan. While membership in the task force initially fluctuated, eventually 16 dedicated members emerged to concentrate on construction of the Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions (also referred to herein as the plan). Going forward, this group communicated through in-person meetings, conference calls, and email correspondence.

We selected an adaptive management process to support future decision making and guide development of the plan. Adaptive management is a systematic, repetitive decision-making process used to move a system forward as participants consider all available knowledge and accept the need to proceed when all desired information is not available (Holling, 1978; Johnson, 1999). This approach establishes management "not only as a way to achieve objectives, but also as a process for probing to learn more about the resource or system being managed" (Johnson, 1999, para. 1).

Adaptive management requires consistent monitoring, or periodic and systematic measurement of observations to identify trends over time (Block, Franklin, Ward, Ganey, & White, 2001; U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA] Forest Service, 1999). Consequently, we considered monitoring central to the strategic plan's success and suggested three forms of continuous monitoring of strategic plan components to support the ability to make regular, iterative adjustments in the plan approximately every 5 years. The forms of monitoring we suggested were implementation monitoring (for determining whether the plan is being carried out as intended), effectiveness monitoring (for determining whether actions are achieving their desired effects), and validation monitoring (for determining whether the models and assumptions used to design the plan remain valid and effective) (Block et al., 2001; USDA Forest Service, 1999). Our perspective was that this monitoring would allow UF/IFAS to identify significant trends, judge whether new approaches are effective, adjust to changes in the urban environment, and provide information to stakeholders.

The task force determined that the strategic plan would feature essential elements (fundamental criteria for urban Extension), a key outcome for each essential element, four measurable levels of performance indicators for achieving each key outcome, and alternatives for action for reaching each specified level of performance. We defined 29 essential elements as the foundation for the strategic plan, and before identifying key outcomes defining the desired state for each essential element, we organized the elements into the following four frameworks:

- institutional framework—economic and social relationships within the university and Florida Extension;
- Extension resources framework—resources required to sustain and enhance urban Extension;
- partnership framework—economic and social relationships outside the university, including national, state, and community partners; and
- implementation framework—educational, research, and technical efforts required to implement the strategic plan.

To develop the essential elements, framework designations, and key outcomes, we implemented a modified version of the Delphi process. The Delphi process is a consensus-building tool that can be used to establish agreement among a panel of subject experts (Dalkey, 2002; Geist, 2010; Linstone & Turoff, 2002). This approach is an appropriate alternative to in-person meetings in many cases (Geist, 2010), and it fit our needs because the task force members were located throughout the state. The Delphi process begins with a generative round in which respondents reply to an open-ended survey question (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). The group's responses are analyzed and used in the design of subsequent surveys, or iterations (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). Panel members individually and anonymously indicate agreement during multiple iterations to reach a predefined level of consensus (Dalkey, 2002; Diamond et al., 2014). Agreement is often measured with Likert

scales having response options ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Typically, two to four iterations are used, and the Delphi process is stopped when consensus is reached (Diamond et al., 2014). Although the definition of consensus is up to the researcher, it should be defined a priori (Diamond et al., 2014; Warner, 2014).

We modified the Delphi process by using an initial face-to-face meeting of the entire task force instead of an open-ended survey to set out the essential elements and framework designations and begin work on the initial key outcomes. This meeting also allowed participants to agree on the process for development of the strategic plan. For the key outcomes, we defined consensus a priori as 70% agreement, and consensus was achieved via email through use of the standard Delphi process, as described above.

Following development of the essential elements, frameworks, and drafted key outcomes, the task force again convened in person to review the drafted key outcomes for language and consistency with the mission, goals, and guiding principles. Redundant essential elements and key outcomes were eliminated or combined. Additionally, we began developing performance indicators for use in measuring progress and success while enacting the plan. We defined four categories of performance indicators: low, moderate, good, and optimal; the path for achieving a specific key outcome for an essential element follows the course of increasingly specific indicators. Indicators not agreed on prior to adjournment were addressed via email through use of the Delphi process.

Next, we conducted an in-person meeting to finalize the performance indicators and determine where we perceived Florida Extension was on the continuum of low to optimal performance for each key outcome so that we could later assign action items. Also at that meeting, we identified a steering committee that would provide additional leadership, bridge gaps in product development, format the plan, define terms and timelines, and ensure consistent and continued progress.

The resulting strategic plan draft with all essential elements, performance indicators, and key outcomes was shared with the dean for Extension in July 2015. The dean expressed support for the plan and encouraged the steering committee to continue development. Another remote meeting of the task force occurred in August, at which time we established alternatives for action intended to facilitate advancement from one performance indicator level to the next (i.e., low to moderate, moderate to good, good to optimal) for each essential element.

In early September 2015, the task force convened to review and further refine the alternatives for action. The task force determined the existing performance level for each essential element to provide a starting point for the element. Corresponding essential elements, performance indicators, and suggested alternatives for action were finalized and prepared for presentation to the Florida Extension leadership team in late September 2015. At that time, the leadership team discussed further development of the strategic plan and further specified alternatives for action and approved the plan.

The Product: A Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions

As has been noted, the task force charged with developing the Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions first established the relevant mission, goals, and guiding principles. The mission of UF/IFAS urban Extension is "to develop knowledge in human, natural, and agricultural resources and to make that knowledge accessible in metropolitan regions to sustain and enhance the quality of human life." The basic UF/IFAS Extension mission statement was simply expanded to include reference to metropolitan regions.

The specific goals are

- to increase the sustainability, profitability, and competitiveness of urban enterprises;
- to enhance and protect urban water quality, quantity, and supply;
- to enhance and conserve Florida's urban natural resources and environmental quality;
- to conserve energy in urban regions;
- to empower individuals and families living in urban regions to build healthy lives and achieve social and economic success;
- to strengthen urban community resources and economic development; and
- to prepare urban youths to be responsible citizens and productive members of the workforce.

And the guiding principles are as follows:

- Embrace diversity.
- Improve quality of life through science-based knowledge and training.
- Increase organizational efficiency through innovation and flexibility.
- Foster public and private partnerships.
- Support municipal and county governments in metropolitan regions.
- Respond to community needs.

The tables that follow present the 29 essential elements sorted into the four frameworks: institutional framework (Table 1), Extension resources framework (Table 2), partnership framework (Table 3), and implementation framework (Table 4). Each essential element is accompanied by corresponding performance indicators that lead to the ultimate key outcome. Existing levels of performance determined by the steering committee as of 2015 are shown as well. The objective is to achieve optimal performance for all essential elements, using the performance indicators to benchmark progress and success while using adaptive management processes to address course corrections over time.

Table 1.

Institutional Framework with Essential Elements, Performance Indicators, and Key Outcomes

**Institutional framework—Performance indicators
(internal economic and social relationships)**

Essential element	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal	Key outcome
University of Florida support and cooperation	University of Florida does not fund urban Extension beyond existing UF/IFAS Extension budget allocation.	University of Florida funds UF/IFAS urban Extension in a limited capacity as land-grant functionality expands within the university.	University of Florida funds UF/IFAS urban Extension appointments in some relevant university departments and generates some urban-focused research and education.	University of Florida funds UF/IFAS urban Extension appointments in all relevant university departments and generates extensive urban-focused research and education.	University of Florida financially supports UF/IFAS urban Extension and cooperates through urban-focused research and education.
Urban extension policy	UF/IFAS Extension uses existing Extension policies to guide internal decision making to address urban needs.	UF/IFAS Extension compares existing Extension policies to those needed for urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension reconciles Extension policies that are inconsistent with the Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions' guiding principles.	UF/IFAS Extension has a comprehensive urban Extension policy that guides internal decision making in accordance with the Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions' guiding principles.	UF/IFAS Extension has an urban Extension policy that guides internal decision making in accordance with the Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions' guiding principles.

Note. Current performance levels as of 2015 are shown in bold. Some text has been modified slightly for this publication. UF/IFAS = University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Table 2.

Extension Resources Framework with Essential Elements, Performance Indicators, and Key Outcomes

**Extension resources—Performance indicators
(resources for sustaining and enhancing urban Extension)**

Essential element	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal	Key outcome
Urban extension management plan	UF/IFAS Extension does not have a management	UF/IFAS Extension has a stand alone management	UF/IFAS Extension has a management plan for urban	UF/IFAS Extension has a fully implemented	UF/IFAS Extension has a management plan for urban

	plan for urban Extension.	plan for urban Extension.	Extension with some ties to the system-wide UF/IFAS Extension mission.	management plan for urban Extension that links UF/IFAS Extension system wide.	Extension that is systematically linked to the UF/IFAS Extension mission.
UF/IFAS funding	UF/IFAS Extension has no funding to implement the Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions.	UF/IFAS Extension secures one-time funding to implement some pieces of the Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions.	UF/IFAS Extension secures recurring funding to implement some pieces of the Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions.	UF/IFAS Extension has dedicated funding to fully implement the Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions.	Dedicated funding supports full implementation of the Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions.
Extension staffing	UF/IFAS Extension uses existing discipline based staff to address identified urban project needs.	UF/IFAS Extension explores a project-based staffing model with the support of outside funding.	UF/IFAS Extension dedicates limited project based staffing to address identified urban project needs.	UF/IFAS Extension fully invests in a combination of project based and discipline based staffing to address identified urban needs.	UF/IFAS Extension uses project based and discipline based staffing models to address identified urban project needs.
Accounting support for revenue-generating classes and projects	Existing UF/IFAS Extension accounting personnel assist with urban Extension revenue needs.	UF/IFAS Extension investigates urban Extension revenue enhancement over time to better address personnel and staffing needs.	UF/IFAS Extension provides resources to help address urban Extension revenue enhancement needs.	UF/IFAS Extension has dedicated accounting personnel and staff who specifically support revenue enhancement for urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension has accounting personnel who support revenue enhancement for urban Extension.
Research-based knowledge for	UF/IFAS Extension	UF/IFAS Extension	UF/IFAS Extension	University of Florida and the	UF/IFAS Extension

<p>urban systems</p>	<p>provides current Florida-based research that addresses assessed urban needs where applicable.</p>	<p>identifies knowledge gaps in assessed urban needs that require new or additional research.</p>	<p>collaborates with some University of Florida departments to compile and extend their urban research to address assessed urban needs.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension Florida-based urban systems research integrates all University of Florida departments in addressing urban needs.</p>	<p>Florida-based urban systems research addresses assessed urban needs.</p>
<p>Urban extension specialists and outreach experts</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension does not have urban Extension specialists.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension has urban Extension specialists.</p>	<p>University of Florida and UF/IFAS Extension have urban Extension specialists and outreach experts.</p>	<p>University of Florida and UF/IFAS Extension have urban Extension specialists and outreach experts in every Extension district.</p>	<p>University of Florida and UF/IFAS Extension have urban Extension specialists and outreach experts, from a diversity of fields, with the knowledge and skills appropriate for working in urban Extension.</p>
<p>IT tools</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension has basic IT tools, technology, and support available.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension provides IT support staff for urban Extension.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension provides IT support staff and some technologies to support urban Extension.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension provides instructional design, web development, and educational platforms to support urban Extension.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension provides IT and tools to support urban Extension.</p>
<p>Communications plan—internal</p>	<p>There is no internal communications plan that supports urban Extension within</p>	<p>There is an internal communications plan at a local level that supports urban</p>	<p>Within UF/IFAS Extension, there is an internal communications plan between</p>	<p>An internal communications plan guides communication within and between county</p>	<p>An internal communications plan supports urban Extension within the University of</p>

	<p>the University of Florida.</p>	<p>Extension.</p>	<p>county and campus faculty that supports urban Extension.</p>	<p>and campus UF/IFAS Extension faculty and staff that supports urban Extension within the University of Florida.</p>	<p>Florida.</p>
<p>Communications plan—external</p>	<p>There is no brand for urban Extension.</p>	<p>There is a brand for urban Extension, but there is no external communications plan to market achievements and solicit clientele.</p>	<p>There is a brand for urban Extension and an external communications plan to market achievements and solicit clientele, but no implementation support.</p>	<p>There is a brand for urban Extension paired with a plan, functional mechanism, and resources needed to give UF/IFAS Extension a recognized presence among urban audiences.</p>	<p>An external communications plan guides communication and gives UF/IFAS Extension a recognized presence among urban audiences.</p>
<p>Accessible services</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension points of service are not accessible to the intended audience.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension points of services are accessible only to clients who have the means to access the service.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension actively identifies deficiencies in access to points of service.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension points of service are deliberately designed to be easily accessible by the intended audience.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension points of service are accessible to all people living in a metropolitan area.</p>
<p>Contracts and grants</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension staff do not work with urban Extension in writing, acquiring, managing, and negotiating grants and contracts.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension staff located on main campus work with urban Extension in managing grants and contracts.</p>	<p>District UF/IFAS Extension staff work with urban Extension in writing, acquiring, managing, and negotiating grants and contracts.</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension staff within urban counties work with urban Extension in searching for funding opportunities and writing,</p>	<p>UF/IFAS Extension staff fully support urban Extension in identifying, writing, acquiring, managing, and negotiating grants and</p>

				acquiring, managing, and negotiating grants and contracts.	contracts.
Professional development	UF/IFAS Extension provides some training that improves the professional competencies in urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension assesses professional development needs and provides further training to address urban Extension competencies.	UF/IFAS Extension provides professional competency training specifically tailored for urban Extension faculty.	UF/IFAS Extension provides comprehensive training for urban competencies based in the needs of the urban Extension faculty.	UF/IFAS Extension provides urban professionals with training that improves the professional competencies needed for urban Extension.

Note. Current performance levels as of 2015 are shown in bold. Some text has been modified slightly for this publication. UF/IFAS = University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. IT = information and technology.

Table 3.

Partnership Framework with Essential Elements, Performance Indicators, and Key Outcomes

**Partnership framework—Performance indicators
(external economic and social relationships)**

Essential element	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal	Key outcome
Cooperation with public agencies	Each county develops its own memorandum of understanding for cooperation with public agencies.	UF/IFAS urban Extension identifies common goals for cooperation with municipal, county, state, and federal agencies.	UF/IFAS urban Extension develops opportunities for achieving identified goals through cooperation with municipal, county, state, and federal agencies.	Based on a systematic framework, UF/IFAS urban Extension is actively engaged in cooperative partnerships with municipal, county, state, and federal agencies.	UF/IFAS urban Extension cooperates with municipal, county, state, and federal agencies.
Cooperation with K–12	UF/IFAS Extension	UF/IFAS urban	UF/IFAS urban Extension	UF/IFAS urban Extension works with	UF/IFAS urban

educational institutions	continues its current partnership efforts with Florida's K-12 institutions.	Extension develops a strategy to identify and develop statewide partnerships with Florida's K-12 institutions.	partners with K-12 institutions to implement key initiatives when goals and objectives align.	K-12 institutions to develop and implement shared goals and objectives through significant investments at the local and state levels.	Extension works in partnership with Florida's K-12 institutions, educators, and students.
Cooperation with colleges and universities	UF/IFAS Extension continues to work with its current collegiate partners and cooperators.	UF/IFAS urban Extension engages colleges and universities within Florida's urban communities to discuss issues of common interest.	UF/IFAS urban Extension cooperates with colleges and universities within Florida's urban communities to establish working groups on specific issues of common interest.	UF/IFAS urban Extension partners with colleges and universities to work cooperatively on issues of common interest.	UF/IFAS urban Extension partners with colleges and universities to work cooperatively on issues of common interest.
Cooperation with NGOs	UF/IFAS Extension continues its current cooperation with NGOs.	UF/IFAS Extension develops a strategy to identify and develop cooperatives with NGOs within the local urban community.	UF/IFAS Extension develops a strategy to identify state and national NGOs that would support goals and objectives of urban communities.	UF/IFAS Extension develops cooperatives with targeted local, state, and national NGOs to support goals and objectives of urban communities.	UF/IFAS Extension cooperates with NGOs to support the goals and objectives of local urban communities.
Cooperation with faith-based and service organizations	UF/IFAS Extension continues its current cooperation on an as-needed basis, addressing	UF/IFAS Extension assesses urban community needs and identifies partners	UF/IFAS Extension engages partners within urban communities to cooperate on specified projects.	UF/IFAS Extension follows a broad but uniform framework/plan for cooperation that is responsive to objectives of individual partners	UF/IFAS Extension cooperates with faith based and service organizations to support

	local community needs.	within local urban communities for cooperation.		while supporting the goals and objectives of local urban communities.	the goals and objectives of local urban communities.
Advisory committees	UF/IFAS Extension uses existing advisory committees to provide advice and advocacy for urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension recruits individuals to existing advisory committee structures to specifically provide advice and advocacy for urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension recruits local urban advisory committees that provide advice and direction for urban Extension according to assessed urban Extension needs.	UF/IFAS Extension extensively recruits, trains, and maintains active statewide urban advisory committees to provide advice and advocacy for urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension recruits, trains, and maintains urban advisory committees to provide advice and advocacy.
Volunteers	UF/IFAS Extension uses current strategies to recruit, train, and use volunteers statewide.	UF/IFAS Extension recruits volunteers for short term projects that address assessed local needs within urban communities.	UF/IFAS Extension has efforts in place to recruit volunteers to address specific assessed needs within urban communities.	UF/IFAS Extension has a comprehensive statewide urban volunteer recruitment and training program to expand the capacity of faculty to address assessed needs within urban communities.	UF/IFAS Extension recruits and trains volunteers to expand the capacity of faculty to address assessed needs within urban communities.
Sponsorships	UF/IFAS Extension has sponsors that support Extension in urban areas.	UF/IFAS Extension identifies potential sponsors for association with specific local urban Extension activities.	UF/IFAS Extension sponsors are engaged in supporting urban Extension initiatives to address regional needs.	UF/IFAS Extension has sponsors that support all aspects of statewide project-based initiatives in urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension has sponsors that assist in addressing specified needs in urban Extension.

Note. Current performance levels as of 2015 are shown in bold. Some text has been modified slightly for this

publication. UF/IFAS = University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. K–12 = kindergarten through grade 12. NGO = nongovernmental organization.

Table 4.

Implementation Framework with Essential Elements, Performance Indicators, and Key Outcomes

**Implementation framework—Performance indicators
(education, research, and technical efforts)**

Essential element	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal	Key outcome
Needs assessment	UF/IFAS Extension agents conduct "pre/post" assessments for specific individual classes statewide.	UF/IFAS Extension conducts educational needs assessments, in cooperation with local partners.	UF/IFAS Extension uses needs assessments and existing data to determine research, management, and educational needs at the county, district, and state levels.	Every 5 years, UF/IFAS Extension conducts a comprehensive, unbiased, research-based urban needs assessment to systematically collect and analyze information used to determine research, management, and educational needs at the county, district, and state levels.	UF/IFAS Extension uses a comprehensive, unbiased, research-based urban needs assessment to systematically collect and analyze information to determine research, management, and educational needs.
Project development and management	UF/IFAS urban Extension is unable to provide consulting, project design, and management services to urban local governments, NGOs, and	UF/IFAS urban Extension has limited and unsupported ability to provide consulting, project design, and management services to	UF/IFAS urban Extension has limited but supported ability to provide consulting, project design, and management services to local governments,	UF/IFAS urban Extension has internal and external resources for and can be responsive and flexible in providing consulting, project design, and management services to local	UF/IFAS urban Extension provides science-based consulting, project design, and management services to local governments, NGOs, and

	communities.	local governments, NGOs, and communities.	NGOs, and communities.	governments, NGOs, and communities.	communities.
Web-based education	No web-based education is produced for urban audiences.	Web-based education is produced for local urban audiences.	Coordinated statewide web-based education is produced for urban audiences.	Multiple delivery platforms tracked by website analytics make up a statewide system for urban audiences.	UF/IFAS Extension provides regularly scheduled interactive presentations tailored for urban audiences and catalogued for on-demand access.
Logic model	Informal logic model concepts are defined only in terms of project goals and objectives but not specified for UF/IFAS urban Extension projects.	Logic model concepts are generally defined for project development and implementation to plan beginning phases of UF/IFAS urban Extension projects.	Static logic model concepts are well defined and guide development, implementation, and evaluation of UF/IFAS urban Extension projects.	Logic models are used as living/modifiable documents throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases for all UF/IFAS urban Extension projects.	Logic models are used to guide all long-term, place-based UF/IFAS urban Extension projects.
Applied research and demonstration	Urban-based needs are identified, but there is no coordination of research and demonstration projects.	Current UF/IFAS Extension research and demonstration projects are assessed to determine applicability to assessed urban needs.	UF/IFAS Extension cooperates with some University of Florida departments to compile and extend their research and demonstration projects.	University of Florida and UF/IFAS Extension integrate Florida based urban systems research and demonstration projects to address assessed urban needs.	UF/IFAS Extension Florida-based research and demonstration projects address assessed urban needs.

Creative works and publications	UF/IFAS Extension creative works and publications do not demonstrate innovation in concept, procedure, and application of science for urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension produces creative works and publications that demonstrate innovation in concept for urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension produces creative works and publications that demonstrate innovation in concepts and procedures for urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension produces creative works and publications that demonstrate innovation in concepts, procedures, and application of science for urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension produces creative works and publications that demonstrate innovation in concepts, procedures, and application of science-based urban Extension.
Evaluation	UF/IFAS urban Extension continues to conduct evaluations using 2015 standards.	UF/IFAS urban Extension evaluates activities using 2015 standards specifically for efficiency and effectiveness in addressing assessed urban needs.	UF/IFAS urban Extension develops and uses evaluation plans, tools, and policies designed to address efficiency and effectiveness in addressing assessed urban needs.	UF/IFAS urban Extension efforts are evaluated, in cooperation with partners, for efficiency and effectiveness in addressing assessed urban needs.	UF/IFAS urban Extension activities are evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness in addressing assessed urban needs.

Note. Current performance levels as of 2015 are shown in bold. Some text has been modified slightly for this publication. UF/IFAS = University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. NGO = nongovernmental organization.

Functionality of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions presents a comprehensive approach to implementing an urban Extension platform by supporting the long-term planning and decision making needed by a large organization. The alternatives for action for each essential element comprise a series of measurable steps that guide activities and resources toward preset outcomes (performance indicators), with a timeline for completion by a responsible person, party, or partnership. The preferred alternatives for action, derived from the present state of the performance indicators, form individual management plans, with each spanning approximately 5 years. This approach allows for time to allocate budgets and adjust expected outcomes of programmatic sections of UF/IFAS urban Extension. Annual individual work plans can then be derived from the 5-year work plans. In this way the plan and its outcomes are completely integrated into and consistent with the overall

Florida Extension mission and set of goals and outcomes. An example of a single essential element with associated key outcome, performance indicators, and alternatives for action is presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Example of Single Essential Element and Corresponding Key Outcome, Performance Indicators, and Alternatives for Action

**Extension resources—Performance indicators
(resources for sustaining and enhancing urban Extension)**

Essential element	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Professional development	UF/IFAS Extension provides some training that improves the professional competencies in urban Extension.	UF/IFAS Extension assesses professional development needs and provides further training to address urban Extension competencies.	UF/IFAS Extension provides professional competency training specifically tailored for urban Extension faculty.	UF/IFAS Extension provides comprehensive training for urban competencies based in the needs of the urban Extension faculty.
Key outcome	UF/IFAS Extension provides urban Extension professionals with training that improves the professional competencies needed for urban Extension.			
Action	Assessment of professional development needs and training is provided to Extension faculty, staff, and leadership to increase the professional competencies needed to address urban Extension issues in metropolitan regions.			
Year to be implemented	3			
Responsible party	Professional development specialists			
Capital costs	\$50,000 (travel support, honorariums, outside instructors)			

Note. Current status as of 2015 is shown in bold. The corresponding action is that needed to advance to good performance. Some text has been modified slightly for this publication. UF/IFAS = University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Implementation

On the basis of the strategic plan, Florida Extension administration committed to working on a communications piece that sets out the key points and next steps of the Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions, for both internal and external audiences. The dean for Extension conducted a Florida-wide Extension faculty town hall meeting in December 2015, which included an explanation of the need for the strategic plan and an overview of the six essential elements that comprised the initial focus of action. Tasks related to those six essential elements were as follows:

- Hire diverse, urban-specific, project-oriented staff university-wide (and consider a possible legislative budget request to support this activity).
- Increase accounting support for revenue enhancement efforts.
- Expand advisory committee recruitment and training.
- Engage the state Extension development office in sponsorship recruitment.
- Conduct a statewide urban needs assessment.
- Reinforce the logic model approach for urban project management.

As indicated above, one of the first actions planned was conduct of a comprehensive, research-based needs assessment of Florida's urban areas. This needs assessment will provide a deeper understanding of Florida's urban programming and clientele. Urban Extension programming directions will then be tailored to address the identified clientele characteristics, needs, and challenges.

Discussion and Conclusions

The development of a strategic plan for UF/IFAS urban Extension has been driven by the desire to remain relevant to Florida's rapidly changing population and demographics, provide the resources necessary for urban Extension, and coordinate statewide efforts for greater impacts. We encourage others to review Florida's Strategic Plan for Extension in Metropolitan Regions (available at <http://extadmin.ifas.ufl.edu/urban.shtml>) and hope we can engage in a dialogue regarding progress and planning efforts. We encourage others to adapt and use the structure presented here to organize dynamic plans to meet their specific needs and desired outcomes. Although we have not yet established monitoring protocols, it is critical to have those in place to support the adaptive management process, as some of the protocols could be new to Extension. Active monitoring enables strong accountability and assures that the process will continue in accordance with the overall plan.

The process of developing a strategic plan designed to advance urban Extension takes substantial time and commitment from the organization, its educators, and its administration. We note that our plan continues to evolve after more than a year of strategic development. Leadership from individuals passionate about urban Extension is vital. The plan itself is best seen as a long term and adaptable plan of action, not a static product. Additionally, the process provides UF/IFAS Extension and its urban partners with adaptive management capabilities for adjusting decision making as the urban environment changes or outcomes from our actions and other events become better understood. The plan further allows for continuous monitoring to ensure that Extension remains relevant and resilient in all its endeavors. Overall, the ultimate purpose of the tool is to provide our urban constituencies the same quality service we have provided traditionally, but with an eye toward their specific needs and changing situations and demographics. In effect, however, it is a plan for all Extension efforts in the future.

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the contribution of the members of the task force who met the goals and produced the approved report. A debt of gratitude is owed to the numerous faculty behind the process and product described

in this article. Many individuals were involved in various capacities that supported the actual plan development.

References

- Block, W. M., Franklin, A. B., Ward, J. P., Ganey, J. L., & White, G. C. (2001). Design and implementation of monitoring studies to evaluate the success of ecological restoration on wildlife. *Restoration Ecology*, 9(3), 293–303.
- Christenson, J. A., & Warner, P. D. (1985). Extension's future is today. *Journal of Extension*, 23(2), Article 2FEA6. Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1985summer/a6.php>
- Dalkey, N. C. (2002). Toward a theory of group estimation. In H. A. Linstone & M. Turoff (Eds.), *The Delphi method: Techniques and applications* (pp. 231–256). Newark, NJ: New Jersey Institute of Technology.
- Diamond, I. R., Grant, R. C., Feldman, B. M., Pencharz, P. B., Ling, S. C., Moore, A. M., & Wales, P. W. (2014). Defining consensus: A systematic review recommends methodologic criteria for reporting of Delphi studies. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 67(4), 401–409.
- Fehlis, C. P. (1992). Urban extension programs. *Journal of Extension*, 30(2), Article 2FEA3. Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1992summer/a3.php>
- Geist, M. R. (2010). Using the Delphi method to engage stakeholders: A comparison of two studies. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 33(2), 147–154. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0149718909000408>
- Henning, J., Buchholz, D., Steele, D., & Ramaswamy, S. (2014). Milestones and the future for Cooperative Extension. *Journal of Extension*, 52(6), Article 6COM1. Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2014december/comm1.php>
- Holling, C. S. (Ed.). (1978). *Adaptive environmental assessment and management*. Chichester, England: Wiley.
- Johnson, B. L. (1999). The role of adaptive management as an operational approach for resource management agencies. *Conservation Ecology*, 3(2), 8. Retrieved from <http://www.consecol.org/vol3/iss2/art8>
- Lamm, D. (1992). Face urban needs through issues-based programming. *Journal of Extension*, 30(2), Article 2TP3. Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1992summer/tp3.php>
- Linstone, H. A., & Turoff, M. (Eds.). (2002). *The Delphi method: Techniques and applications*. Newark, NJ: New Jersey Institute of Technology.
- National Urban Extension Leaders. (2015). *A national framework for urban Extension*. Retrieved from http://media.wix.com/ugd/c34867_668cd0780daf4ea18cb1daddad557c72.pdf
- Nelson-Smith, K. (2011). Extension's role in urban education: Why aren't we involved? *Journal of Extension*, 49(4), Article 4COM1. Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2011august/comm1.php>
- Oberholtzer, L., Dimitri, C., & Pressman, A. (2014). Urban agriculture in the United States: Characteristics, challenges, and technical assistance needs. *Journal of Extension*, 52(6), Article 6FEA1. Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2014december/a1.php>

- Pipkin, W. (2015). Urban farmers say its time they got their own research farms. National Public Radio. May 18, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/05/18/407732692/urban-farmers-say-its-time-they-got-their-own-research-farms>
- Raison, B. (2014). Doing the work of Extension: Three approaches to identify, amplify, and implement outreach. *Journal of Extension*, 52(2), Article 2FEA1. Available at: <https://www.joe.org/joe/2014april/a1.php>
- University of Florida Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences. (2015). *Strategic plan for Extension in metropolitan regions*. Retrieved from <http://extadmin.ifas.ufl.edu/urban.shtml>
- University of Florida Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension. (2013). *Shaping Florida's future: The UF/IFAS Extension Roadmap 2013–2023*. Retrieved from http://pdec.ifas.ufl.edu/roadmap/FloridaExtensionRoadmap_2013-2023.pdf
- Urban Area Criteria for the 2010 Census, 76 Fed. Reg. 53029 (August 24, 2011). Retrieved from <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2011/08/24/2011-21647/urban-area-criteria-for-the-2010-census>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Census urban and rural classification and urban area criteria*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *State and county quick facts*. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12000.html>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service. (1999). *Forest plan*. Retrieved from <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/florida/landmanagement/planning/?cid=STELPRDB5269793>
- Warner, L. (2014). *Using the Delphi technique to achieve consensus: A research tool for guiding Extension programs*. University of Florida Cooperative Extension Electronic Data Information Source (Publication # AEC521). Retrieved from <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/wc183>
- Webster, N., & Ingram, P. (2007). Exploring the challenges for Extension educators working in urban communities. *Journal of Extension*, 45(3), Article 3IAW3. Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2007june/iw3.php>
- Woodson, D. M., Lindner, J. R., & Lawver, D. E. (2008). Urban Extension clientele competencies by mass media delivery strategy. *Journal of Extension*, 46(2), Article 2RIB6. Available at: <https://www.joe.org/joe/2008april/rb6.php>
- Young, J., & Vavrina, C. (2014). Kentucky's urban Extension focus. *Journal of Extension*, 52(3), Article 3IAW3. Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2014june/iw3.php>

Copyright © by Extension Journal, Inc. ISSN 1077-5315. Articles appearing in the Journal become the property of the Journal. Single copies of articles may be reproduced in electronic or print form for use in educational or training activities. Inclusion of articles in other publications, electronic sources, or systematic large-scale distribution may be done only with prior electronic or written permission of the Journal Editorial Office, joe-ed@joe.org.

If you have difficulties viewing or printing this page, please contact [JOE Technical Support](#)