

Support for UW-Extension Staffing to Meet Needs of Northwest Wisconsin

The Citizens of Northwest Wisconsin Request

That the UW Cooperative Extension continue to maintain a strong county Extension educator based presence in northwest Wisconsin.

Background

Budget reductions to the UW System have resulted in a \$3.6 million deficit in UW Cooperative Extension's annual budget, prompting a review and examination of how it currently delivers educational programs throughout the state. UW-Extension is engaged a two-year planning process called Next Generation UW-Cooperative Extension or *nEXT Gen*, which calls for: \$1.2 million cut to Cooperative Extension's investment in counties and tribal nations, \$1.7 million cut in campus and UW-Extension specialists and a \$0.7 million cut in administrative support.

As part of this cut, it was recommended to reorganize and replace the current county Educator centric program delivery model with a multi-county and urban county centric delivery models. Seventeen multi-county areas would be created averaging four counties per area along with five metro/urban single counties. Northwestern Wisconsin would have an area, which includes: Bayfield, Ashland, Douglas, and Iron Counties.

Different staffing models have been released through this planning process. Currently there are several UW-Extension work groups conducting a system and gap analysis for Cooperative Extension. Recommendations for new staffing models will then go to an Integration Workgroup.

Under this new proposed model, the state would be making a very large new investment in state administrative-related personnel, and making a very large disinvestment in county-based Extension educators. The remaining delivery of Extension educator programs would now be shared among fewer Extension educators, half of whom will be serving and circuit riding around a multi-county area.

We have very serious reservations about this proposed model's effectiveness in delivering impactful education programs to the citizens of northwest Wisconsin. We believe it is very important to continue to maintain a strong county Extension educator based delivery program to best serve the needs of our citizens.