

A Statewide Summary of Stakeholder Input 2016-2017

Stakeholder input sessions enable UW Extension to gather feedback from Wyoming citizens. Each session includes individual focus groups around UW Extension's five educational initiatives: Sustainable Management of Rangeland Resources; Agriculture and Horticulture; Community Development Education; Nutrition and Food Safety; and 4-H and Youth Development.

These listening sessions are opportunities to identify issues important to Wyoming citizens. We value your feedback and strive to provide opportunities for you to identify positive things that happen in your counties and local communities and to share your concerns and suggestions, which help direct UW Extension programming.

One hundred forty-six individuals participated in Park, Johnson, Albany, Niobrara, and Uinta counties sessions December 2016 through February 2017. Results were analyzed to help identify issues that have emerged across the state in the initiative areas.

This summary reflects those issues that were prioritized and had common themes across Wyoming. Results will be used by county, area, and state extension teams to direct new programming efforts.

Sustainable Management of Rangeland Resources

Balancing the interests of diverse audiences on rangelands, particularly public rangelands, is a common concern. Tension between stakeholder groups intensifies as new issues surface from changing regulations. While UW Extension does not influence or advocate policies, communication about their importance along with education about regulations and the significance to clientele is necessary.

- The management and containment of invasive species. This includes educating those who use public lands and ranch managers/owners and agencies where collaboration among groups is most effective.
- Access to use and increased demand on rangelands, grazing permits, extraction, wildlife, general public, etc.
- Regulations that increase cost to ranchers.

Agriculture and Horticulture

Increased profitability of agricultural operations can be realized in different ways: business management, marketing strategies, niche market production, communication, and networking.

- Increase profitability of agricultural operations by helping a rancher understand and run a successful business. The need for Wyoming-specific scientific research that addresses the unique challenges was also discussed as part of the effort to increase profitability.
- Providing opportunities that allow younger generations to assume management and control of their family's agricultural operations.
- Educating the general public about agricultural operations so citizens understand where their food comes from and the issues facing agricultural producers. This combats misinformation that negatively affects agriculture and other businesses in food distribution and retail.
- The need for effective collaboration to enhance communication and networking within the agricultural community, including individual producers, stakeholders, businesses, and agencies.



Community Development Education

Limited economic opportunities and struggling industries can create hardships for many families in rural areas. As incomes of wage earners decline, the conflict between shopping locally and cheaper prices at big box stores and the ease of ordering online affects businesses in rural communities. The number of available services in rural areas is also affected and may encourage young people to relocate to areas with more opportunities and resources.

- Expand leadership training and educational opportunities outside the traditional school system, such as mentoring, apprenticeships, and journeyman-type opportunities to new industries and sectors.
- Economic diversity to provide a more stable tax structure and provide well-paying jobs. Training and support for entrepreneurs. Creative promotion to support local economies: shop locally.
- Resources and opportunities to encourage young people to stay in rural communities. Promote the rural-ness and high quality of life that exists in many Wyoming communities.

Nutrition and Food Safety

Continuing to find creative ways to reach clientele with accurate nutrition, health, and food safety information is important. Hands-on workshops for youth and adults is an effective teaching method, but there is also a need to help clientele learn how and where to find and use accurate and reliable information in other ways, including online resources and social media avenues. Motivating clientele to consume healthier foods is a challenge because the convenience and easy accessibility of processed foods offer advantages for many families.

- Lack of availability and cost of fresh food are issues in many rural communities. Families on budgets struggle to purchase healthy, more expensive food.
- Strategies for individuals and families to prioritize healthy food choices. Includes education where to find reliable and accurate nutrition information, planning menus, cooking from scratch, time-saving food preparation techniques, etc.
- Organizations and agencies that provide resources for limited income families often subsidize processed foods that are not as healthy as fresh foods.

4-H Youth Development

Marketing the opportunities available in 4-H continues to be important. As one participant shared, “People in general don’t know what 4-H is or what we have to offer.” Some people may see the UW name and associate 4-H with a high cost of programming. This is a perceived barrier that needs addressed through marketing and outreach to connect with new audiences.

- Available economic resources influence the level of parental support and affects how youth might be involved. Youth wanting to get involved in the 4-H program often face the challenge of parents unwilling to bring them to 4-H events.
- Competing demands for time and resources of youth and their families in other activities are more apparent in rural areas. Youth in rural areas tend to be involved in all of the extracurricular activities, not just a few, because the youth population is smaller.

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