



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Strategic Planning Process Guidebook

Produced by Illinois Extension's Strategic Planning Steering Committee

A Message from the Assistant Dean and Director

Dear University of Illinois Extension Community,

Through the end of 2024, we will engage in a strategic planning process that will create opportunities for many voices to contribute their vision for Illinois Extension's future. I am confident that a process that synthesizes the ideas of our entire community will result in a compelling, innovative, and forward-thinking strategic plan.

This strategic planning guidebook includes several optional exercises to assist our community in thinking about Illinois Extension's future. We invite you to use the exercises within it to contribute ideas to support our strategic planning efforts.

To help guide our community-driven process, we have established a Steering Committee including 18 representatives from across our community. Please see more information on the Steering Committee, including their charter and membership, on our [Strategic Planning website](#). As your submissions are compiled and reviewed, the Steering Committee will identify common themes to develop a current state assessment, conduct an evaluation of market trends, and recommend a set of new opportunities for Illinois Extension to advance its mission.

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to our strategic planning process and seize this opportunity to define our future success. It is through our communal sense of ownership and contributions in this strategic planning process that I know our future will be bright.

Sincerely,

Shelly Nickols-Richardson, Ph.D., RD
Associate Dean and Director, University of Illinois Extension & Outreach

Table of Contents

Timeline and How to Get Involved..... 4

Key Ideas Form 7

Optional Exercises for Illinois Extension’s Strategic Planning Process 8

Illinois Extension’s Purpose Today and in the Future 8

Start, Stop, Continue..... 11

Appendix..... 16

Strategic Planning at Illinois Extension – Our History..... 16

Timeline and How to Get Involved

We invite the full University of Illinois Extension community to engage in our strategic planning process that begins now and will continue into the 2024 calendar year.

This guidebook and its exercises focus on supporting Phases 1 and 2 of the planning process: **Assessing the Current State and Engaging Stakeholders** and **Developing Vision and Strategic Priorities**. We welcome and would greatly appreciate your participation in completing one or more of the strategic planning exercises in this document. All submissions should be submitted via this [online survey](#)

To complement input via the exercises in this guidebook, we encourage Illinois Extension community members to participate throughout our strategic planning process. The following page provides an overview of the process we will follow and demonstrates how you can participate in each step. Please visit our [website](#) for regular updates and opportunities to engage in this process in person. If you have any questions about the process, please feel free to reach out to uie-strategicplan@illinois.edu.

A Phased Process



Phase 1: Assess the Current State and Engage Stakeholders (April 2023-September 2023)

- The Associate Dean/Director of University of Illinois Extension announces the strategic planning process, timeline, steering committee membership, charge, and your involvement
- Strategic planning [website](#), email account (uie-strategicplan@illinois.edu), and guidebook released
- Steering committee commences evaluation of potential areas of focus and engages the Illinois Extension community through listening sessions and other formats
- Strategic conversations begin internally and externally with all Illinois Extension stakeholders, strategic partners, and communities
- Ongoing updates shared by the steering committee to the Illinois Extension community [this](#)

The full Illinois Extension community is invited and encouraged to:

- Attend town halls to understand and participate in the strategic planning process. Town halls this year will occur in May and October. A schedule and more details can be found [online](#).
- Brainstorm and provide feedback on areas of focus
- Complete the online form on the strategic planning process to share findings from exercises listed in this guidebook
- Submit questions to uie-strategicplan@illinois.edu.
- Invite Steering Committee members to attend meetings to discuss the strategic planning process and collaborate on ideas
- Complete the exercises listed in this guidebook

Phase 2: Develop Vision and Strategic Priorities (August 2023-November 2023)

- The steering committee shares online survey and stakeholder engagement results
- The steering committee conducts listening sessions to socialize emerging findings
- The steering committee advances prioritized opportunities with the Leadership Team, Executive Team, and Illinois Extension community
- Strategic Priority Committee produces reports, summarizing the findings

The full Illinois Extension community is invited and encouraged to:

- Attend listening sessions for each strategic priority. A schedule and more details can be found [here](#)
- Assist in evaluating and prioritizing identified opportunities
- Engage Steering Committee members to provide feedback on and advance identified priorities
- Submit questions to uie-strategicplan@illinois.edu

Phase 3: Draft and Socialize Strategic Plan (December 2023-April 2024)

- Draft and socialize strategic plan, accounting for and incorporating relevant community feedback
- New strategic plan finalized and approved by the Executive Team

The full Illinois Extension community is invited and encouraged to:

- Attend sessions and discussions to provide feedback on a draft plan
- Engage Steering Committee members to provide feedback on and advance identified priorities
- Submit questions to uie-strategicplan@illinois.edu

Phase 4: Plan and Advise on Implementation (April 2024-September 2024)

- Working groups formed on key initiatives of the new strategic plan
- Implementation, assessment, and reporting processes begin

Key Ideas Form

Please use the [online survey](#) to answer the following questions regarding the exercises you completed, your resulting insights, and additional comments. If you are unable to complete the form online, please email responses to uie-strategicplan@illinois.edu. **Please submit all ideas by June 30.**

Individual / Group Name: _____

Job Title / Role: _____

Contact details (optional) (email/phone): _____

Date Completed: _____

Please confirm where most of your work is focused from the following list:

Please specify which county you are located in:

Extension employees, please specify which region you are located in:

Extension employees, please specify which unit you are located in:

- Illinois Extension's Purpose
- Start-Stop-Continue

Open field: Please share any additional thoughts:

Illinois Extension Strategic Planning Process Exercises

University of Illinois Extension's Purpose Today and in the Future

In describing the purpose of the institution, the Illinois Extension mission statement, vision, and values (below) imply certain commitments.

Mission Statement: We are committed to our mission linking local communities to the university, to develop programs, tools, and knowledge that will support needed change. Our mission is to align research to needs and translate research into action plans that allow Illinois families, businesses, and community leaders to solve problems, make informed decisions, and adapt to changes and opportunities.

Vision: As Extension professionals, we:

- Focus on critical economic, environmental, leadership, youth, and family development issues
- Engage people in lifelong learning
- Address emerging needs by developing programs that anticipate social, economic, and policy changes
- Apply valid, reliable research and information
- Bring together and extend University of Illinois resources
- Maximize resources by initiating and organizing community coalitions
- Educate without discrimination and employ people representing the diversity in the state's population
- Recruit and prepare volunteers to help support Extension's outreach goals
- Teach with appropriate and effective educational techniques and methods
- Value teamwork, recognizing and supporting the contributions of others

Values: As Extension professionals, we are dedicated to the following values:

- We believe in providing excellence in educational programming
- We believe in providing accessible programs that help people solve problems
- We believe in useful, practical programs
- We believe in creating value for people
- We believe in quick responses to customers' concerns
- We believe in providing unbiased information
- We believe in establishing credibility with customers

In your opinion, does the University of Illinois Extension *mission statement* accurately convey our purpose of supporting the extraordinary diversity of Illinois families, businesses, and communities? (select one)

- 1) Strongly Agree
- 2) Somewhat Agree
- 3) Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4) Somewhat Disagree
- 5) Strongly Disagree

If you disagree, please explain why: _____

In your opinion, do the University of Illinois Extension's *vision and values* remain relevant and accurately convey our purpose of supporting the extraordinary diversity of Illinois families, businesses, and communities? (select one)

- 1) Strongly Agree
- 2) Somewhat Agree
- 3) Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4) Somewhat Disagree
- 5) Strongly Disagree

If you disagree, please explain why: _____

Among Illinois Extension's 14 state priorities, please rank the top five priorities *that you currently use to support your community or target population* (select the top five with one representing the greatest impact in your community):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce Preparedness/Advancement | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Wellbeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Production |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Vitality | <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic Disease Prevention and Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Involvement and Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Social and Emotional Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connectedness and Inclusion | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy and Safe Community Environments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thriving Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Enhancing and Preserving Natural Resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Access | <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement with Home and Community Landscapes |

Among Illinois Extension's 14 state priorities, please rank the top five priorities aligning with *the greatest unmet needs for your community or target population* (select the top five with one representing the greatest unmet need in your community):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce Preparedness/Advancement | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Wellbeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Production |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Vitality | <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic Disease Prevention and Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Involvement and Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Social and Emotional Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connectedness and Inclusion | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy and Safe Community Environments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thriving Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Enhancing and Preserving Natural Resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Access | <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement with Home and Community Landscapes |

In your opinion, are there any additional priorities that the current list of 14 state priorities does not capture? If yes, which priorities are missing in your opinion?

Start, Stop, Continue

Effectively balancing all the initiatives and priorities of a strategic plan is an evolving process. This simple exercise to evaluate progress, effectiveness, and changing priorities can provide a fresh perspective on the vision for our future.

IMPORTANT NOTE: While it is easy to become focused on specific actions or tasks, this exercise is designed for thinking about higher-level or unit-level initiatives or goals. At these early stages of the strategic planning process, thinking from an elevated bird’s-eye view about larger goals and vision, as they relate to Illinois Extension as well as the external landscape, is most productive.

Start	Stop	Continue
<p data-bbox="285 905 496 999">What should we start doing?</p> <p data-bbox="212 1031 545 1058">List initiatives or ideas that:</p> <ul data-bbox="212 1094 553 1465" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="212 1094 553 1192">• Illinois Extension isn’t doing, but you think should be done<li data-bbox="212 1228 553 1289">• New ideas that have not been considered before<li data-bbox="212 1325 553 1465">• Ideas to address emerging external trends, achieve important outcomes, or improve internal efficiencies	<p data-bbox="708 905 919 999">What should we stop doing?</p> <p data-bbox="634 1031 967 1058">List initiatives or ideas that:</p> <ul data-bbox="634 1094 976 1478" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="634 1094 976 1192">• Are not contributing to the desired outcomes for Illinois Extension<li data-bbox="634 1228 976 1352">• No longer align with Illinois Extension’s mission and values or the needs across Illinois<li data-bbox="634 1388 976 1478">• Internal processes or structures that are no longer effective or adding value	<p data-bbox="1130 905 1341 999">What should we continue doing?</p> <p data-bbox="1057 1031 1390 1058">List initiatives or ideas that:</p> <ul data-bbox="1057 1094 1398 1556" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="1057 1094 1398 1155">• Are working well for Illinois Extension<li data-bbox="1057 1190 1398 1251">• Are effective, streamlining internal processes<li data-bbox="1057 1287 1398 1386">• Align well with the mission and values of Illinois Extension<li data-bbox="1057 1421 1398 1556">• Enhance our relationships with individuals, businesses, and communities across Illinois

Start, Stop, Continue (Continued)

1. What should Illinois Extension **start** doing?

2. What should Illinois Extension **stop** doing?

3. What should Illinois Extension **continue** doing?



College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

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