

National Urban Extension Leaders

Advocating and advancing the strategic importance and long-term value of urban Extension work.



Framing A National Dialogue of Urban Extension Today: A Request for Partnership

Background:

On July 20, 2020, NUEL convened a *Dialogue on Racism* around our urban Extension work in which 155 persons gave voice to outline our greatest needs and opportunities.

We are working today within the reality of COVID 19, and the historical and current pandemic of systemic racism, both of which are negatively impacting communities across the U.S.

"Extension should do institutional self-reflection before doing this work in the community; there have been [un-sustained] efforts like this before."

"Extension has a lot more to prove than our community partners. Extension has to make a long-term commitment - 50 years, not 5."

Our Premise:

- Extension has been historically complicit in the systemic racism that exists in our country, and needs to be involved in community conversation and action around racism today.
- Extension's urban programs require unique approaches to achieve positive community impacts.
- Extension's national leaders and partners are needed to co-create responses and initiatives to foster productive dialogues around race.

Key Findings / Greatest Needs: (See page 2 detail with potential action items extracted from the data.)

1. Visible, active, and sustained leadership and support from Extension administration is a prerequisite to meaningful progress.
2. Extension needs to build its own internal capacity (such as adequate staffing, training, accountability, and collaboration across internal silos) before it can support unmet needs of its community partners specific to racism, diversity, equity and inclusion.
3. A concerted, transformative, and goal-oriented hiring & retention effort is necessary to both advance and support a more diverse workforce, which will in turn better support diverse audience needs.
4. Extension must invest in research and evaluation of the impact of racism in our communities as well as the impact of efforts to alleviate issues.
5. Extension must build trust and nurture relationships with our urban community partners to increase reach and support deep community change.
6. Extension materials across all program areas need to be reshaped to reflect inclusion and diversity values while meeting communities' most pressing unmet needs.

Our Request:

To effect change and positive impact throughout our national Extension system, NUEL seeks partnerships at the highest levels of leadership to help co-create approaches that will have positive impacts for our urban Extension workers, and in our urban communities. *Would you join us? Would you:*

- **Choose** one of the needs listed above.
- **Adopt** it as a theme in 2021 and **share** it with your entire organization.
- **Encourage** conversation and **support** programming on that theme.

To you, we pledge to continue conversation, curate resources, and serve as your support. **Add your name** to the **NUEL Leader List for Racial Understand** by **replying to this [LINK](#)** with a simple, "Yes." Thank you for your consideration. Please contact either Dr. Ruemenapp or Ms. Debose with any questions.

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Specific Action Items Identified that Support the Key Findings / Greatest Needs:

1. Visible, active, and sustained leadership and support from Extension administration is a prerequisite to meaningful progress.
 - Set DEI and dialogue efforts as a system priority. Communicate this through:
 - Messaging to staff
 - Funding for internal training
 - Funding for external programming
 - Participate in training efforts, thus leading by example.
2. Extension needs to build its own internal capacity to address racism (staffing, training, DEI knowledge, commitment, accountability, internal silos) before it can support needs of its community partners.
 - Invest in training to support:
 - Staff growth in their own understanding of racism and its impacts
 - Building skills to foster productive dialogue in communities.
 - Hire or identify and train staff that are capable of leading statewide efforts.
 - Include effort and support it in formal plans of work time and support not as another “add on” to existing responsibilities.
 - Ensure this work is valued in promotion and tenure processes.
3. A concerted, transformative, and goal-oriented hiring & retention effort is necessary.
 - Formally assess current hiring and retention practices, using the lens of DEI.
 - Give more weight to “real world” experience with marginalized audiences and to DEI experience in hiring practices.
 - Hire bi-lingual staff to meet specific community needs
4. Extension must invest in research and evaluation of the impact of Extension programs on racism in our communities.
 - Foster collaboration with existing national/multi-state efforts to measure impact
 - Encourage research that gauges impact on community/state efforts to promote DEI and productive dialogues
5. Extension must build trust and nurture relationships with our urban community partners in order to address racism effectively.
 - Identify community partners engaged in or interested in working collaboratively on productive dialogues.
6. Responsive and relevant program materials and trainings (responding to communities’ unmet / articulated needs) that reflect inclusion and diversity values must be developed and used.
 - Ensure high impact materials are translated to meet the needs of diverse language audiences
 - Examine current/new program materials to ensure diverse audiences see themselves represented in a positive manner.