



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Cooperative State
Research, Education,
and Extension Service

May 1996

Urban Extension: A National Agenda

A Report of the National Extension Urban Task Force

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Foreword

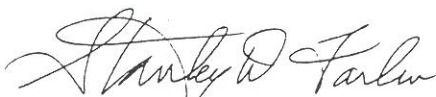
Urban Extension: A National Agenda presents a vision of the future of U.S. urban Extension programs as well as a suggested framework within which this vision can be realized. The document has been prepared by the National Extension Urban Task Force, a subcommittee of the Program Leadership Committee of the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy.

The Program Leadership Committee charged the Task Force with defining a framework for urban Extension. Accordingly, the Task Force has explored the role of urban Cooperative Extension with numerous Extension colleagues, customers, and organizational partners at the local, state, and national levels. The group also examined *Framing the Future: Strategic Framework for a System of Partnerships* with an eye toward developing an urban agenda that builds upon it.

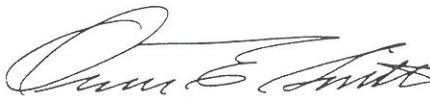
Incentive for development of the *Agenda* was first generated at the national Big Cities Conference hosted by the Task Force in San Diego in August 1994. This meeting brought together urban, county, state, and national Extension professionals, civic officials, community leaders, and other participants to discuss priority urban issues. A draft of the *Agenda* was presented at the second national Big Cities Conference, held in Atlanta in August 1995. This report reflects input from attendees of that conference.

The document provides an agenda for mobilizing Extension education for urban audiences. It invites local, county, state, and regional educational partners to plan, implement, and evaluate programs that reach suburban communities and our inner cities. It also suggests new models of program delivery and new roles for Extension educators as collaborators and partners in innovative urban programs.

The Task Force encourages use of the *Agenda* both within and outside the Extension community to heighten awareness of and support for ongoing urban Extension programs. Together, concerned professionals nationwide can work to realize Extension's exciting potential in urban communities.



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Chair, National Extension
Urban Task Force



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National Urban Program Leader



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Contents

Foreword	iii
Overview	1
Why an Urban Agenda?	1
Recent Successes	2
Vision, Mission, and Values	5
Urban Extension Vision.....	5
Urban Extension Mission	5
Values	5
Assumptions	6
Realizing the Vision	7
Outcomes	7
Outcome 1: Healthy individuals and families	7
Outcome 2: Healthy neighborhoods.....	7
Outcome 3: Healthy environments.....	7
Outcome 4: A healthy workforce	7
Goals	7
<i>Goal 1: Expand the resource pool by utilizing a variety of means to support existing and ongoing Cooperative Extension educational efforts in urban settings.....</i>	8
Objective 1: Expand public funding.....	8
Strategies.....	8
Objective 2: Expand and sustain resources	8
Strategies.....	8
Objective 3: Develop nonfiscal resources.....	8
Strategies.....	8
Objective 4: Expand urban networks	9
Strategies.....	9
<i>Goal 2: Develop and support partnerships among public and private agencies, groups, and organizations who share a common urban vision</i>	9
Objective 1: Serve as a catalyst	9
Strategies.....	9

Objective 2: Nurture relationships	9
Strategies.....	9
<i>Goal 3: Enhance and advance the urban education knowledge base for Extension professionals as well as for organizations, businesses, and interest groups.....</i>	10
Objective 1: Access research-based knowledge	10
Strategies.....	10
Objective 2: Use performance objectives	10
Strategies.....	10
<i>Goal 4: Expand awareness of metropolitan and urban issues, and define the role of Extension and its partners in addressing these issues.....</i>	10
Objective 1: Develop market strategies	10
Strategies.....	10
Objective 2: Develop public relations strategies.....	11
Strategies.....	11
<i>Goal 5: Inform, educate, and influence decisionmakers with the potential to impact policy development for urban residents</i>	11
Objective 1: Increase urban awareness	11
Strategies.....	11
Objective 2: Influence decisions and policy	12
Strategies.....	12
The Outlook for Urban Extension	13
Historical and Political Trends.....	13
Resources	14
Networking and Advocacy.....	14
Legislation and Policy.....	14
Prospects for Change	15
A Call to Action.....	16
Acknowledgments.....	17

We do belong in the cities—with all of us truly working together for a greater common good rather than narrow institutional interests. I believe it can be done and hope that you will join with those of us who see the future of the state and land-grant university as a future built around collaborative public service and extending the fruits of our knowledge in new and exciting ways to meeting the needs of our American people—wherever they live, in our rural, suburban, and urban communities. All of us are the "we" who belong in the cities!

C. PETER MAGRATH

*President, National Association of State
Universities and Land-Grant Colleges*

Overview

The Cooperative Extension System (CES) is a publicly funded, lifelong learning system that links the education and research resources and activities of 74 land-grant universities, 3,150 counties, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). CES includes a network of 32,000 employees and 2.8 million trained volunteers. This unique system is authorized by the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 and companion legislation in each state and territory. The land-grant universities were established by the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890.

Cooperative Extension has "followed the people" with programs for urban residents.

The Congressional authorization that established CES does not restrict programs to particular groups of people or geographic locations. In fact, it charges the Extension System with providing information and educational opportunities to this Nation's residents in the communities in which they live. As the United States has grown, and metropolitan areas have become the home for the majority of the population, Cooperative Extension has "followed the people" by developing programs that address the specific educational needs of urban residents. Programs in youth development (4-H), human nutrition (e.g., the Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program, or EFNEP), and urban gardening have a proven track record in urban areas.

Why an Urban Agenda?

Today, urban communities have an increased and urgent need for educational opportunities and research-based information as they confront multifaceted issues of deteriorating communities, dysfunctional families, declining workforce preparedness, and distressed environment. Crime, poverty, water quality, nutrition and health, parenting, youth development, illiteracy, illegitimacy, unemployment, and feelings of hopelessness are only some of the many complex issues faced by urban residents.

In addition, all people—regardless of where they live—are consumers of food. Issues related to the food and fiber chain, protection of our natural resources, and recognition of the interdependence of rural and urban residents are important to

CES programs have had considerable success in confronting urban challenges.

all consumers. As world population increases, demand for food and fiber production is heightening at a time of increasing urban sprawl, diminishing natural resources, deeper threats to environmental quality, and growing concern for the quality of life of individuals and families. Americans who are literate in the dynamics and interactions of rural and urban issues can address these challenges with greater insight and skill. CES educational programs focus on increasing this needed understanding.

Extension has demonstrated its expertise in delivering educational programs to targeted audiences. Several states and counties have determined, through local advisory groups, that urban communities are among their highest priorities and have chosen to allocate resources accordingly.

Recent Successes

The Extension System recognizes the interrelatedness and interdependence of people living in rural, suburban, and urban areas. Its educational programs help link producers of food and fiber to consumers (62 percent of whom live in urban areas) by focusing on issues such as food safety, food security, human nutrition, and environmental safety. In addition, urban CES programs focus on safeguarding and improving the health and well-being of individuals, neighborhoods, and environments and on increasing workforce preparation. This is accomplished by helping urban residents develop their capacities, take responsibility for their lives, make constructive decisions, and optimize their productivity. CES programs have had considerable success in confronting the myriad challenges of urban environments nationwide.

Examples of program success include the following:

- In Miami, the University of Florida CES EFNEP reached 4,075 low-income families in Fiscal Year 1994 to change dietary patterns for improved health and nutrition. EFNEP participants reported annual savings in their food bill of \$270.92 each, resulting in a total savings of \$1.1 million.
- In Los Angeles, the University of California CES collaborates with the Department of Housing and Urban Development,

corporations, foundations, and the National 4-H Council in the 4-H After School Program. Gang-related activities are losing out to such programs in 24 inner-city sites. Young people learn leadership, responsibility, cooperation, respect for themselves and others, and the value of academic achievement.

- In Waterford and Old Saybrook, CT, the University of Connecticut CES developed a program to educate municipal officials in managing nonpoint source water pollution. Using geographic information systems technology, land-use officials learned to address regional concerns related to economic development and water quality more effectively.
- In Chicago, the University of Illinois CES developed the Parent Readiness Education Program (PREP). In 1993-94, all PREP participants completed high school—in a neighborhood in which drop-out rates were at least 50 percent.
- In Seattle, the Washington State University CES collaborates with the city of Seattle in teaching youth from diverse ethnic groups the basics of job responsibility. Participants begin by meeting job responsibilities in the home, with evaluations. Then they progress to jobs in community agencies, and finally to positions with private industry. As a result of this collaboration, 200 youth participants have been successfully employed, and Seattle has decided to continue providing resources for the program.
- In many states, significant agricultural industries (such as landscape and foliage plants, greenhouse vegetables and flowers, and fresh market fruits and vegetables) are located within large metropolitan areas and contribute to their economies. For example, the horticulture industry contributes over \$50 million annually to the economy of Dallas County, TX. In metropolitan areas across the country, agricultural specialists and urban Extension agents work together to support these industries and to address the complex issues of the urban-rural interface.
- Some of the most successful urban Extension programs are a direct result of research and Extension education developed for production agriculture. For example, training programs for pesticide applicators are used widely by commercial and agency personnel in controlling pests in metropolitan areas.

Young people learn leadership, responsibility, and cooperation.

*CES programs can
empower urban residents
to improve their lives.*

On Long Island, NY, pesticide sales have decreased by 35 percent since Cornell Extension began its Ground Water Management Education Program in 1988.

- Master Gardeners, trained and supervised by Extension workers, assist city governments in cleaning up vacant lots—making them safe for children and adults. The gardeners also educate homeowners in the safe handling and storage of pesticides. In Chicago alone, nearly 6,000 students participated in the school component of the Urban Gardening Program during the 1993-94 school year.

Achievements such as these demonstrate the ability of CES programs to reach urban residents and to empower them to improve their lives. However, much remains to be done before CES can realize its true potential in metropolitan areas.

Vision, Mission, and Values

The direction of CES programs for urban audiences is shaped by the urban Extension vision, mission, and values, which are set forth in this section.

Urban Extension Vision

Urban Extension envisions a nation in which people value and use community-focused learning as a means of improving their lives and in which people accept responsibility for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Urban educators recognize and value all people.

Urban Extension Mission

Cooperative Extension in urban communities educates by engaging individuals, families, and communities in learning partnerships that result in informed decisions and the application of knowledge to solve critical issues for a sustainable future.

Values

The following values or underlying beliefs are essential to effective urban Extension education:

- **Diversity.** Urban Extension educators recognize and value all people.
- **Quality of life.** Urban Extension educators believe that people, when able to access knowledge, opportunities, and skills, will seek a desired quality of life for themselves, their families, and their communities.
- **Cooperation.** Urban Extension educators believe that all people benefit from active participation and cooperation and that much can be achieved through formal and informal relationships, associations, and partnerships.
- **Innovation.** Urban Extension educators believe in using innovative ways to address current issues and new demands.

These values undergird the high-quality programs that Extension educators in urban areas strive to deliver.

Assumptions

The following assumptions are helpful in guiding successful urban Extension education programs:

CES needs to develop formal linkages and partnerships.

- The Urban Extension *Agenda* acknowledges and builds upon *Framing the Future: Strategic Framework for a System of Partnerships*.
- The Extension System needs to move from thinking in terms of "urban vs. rural" to thinking in terms of "urban-rural interdependence."
- There is a need to build an advocacy network for Extension educational programs in urban areas.
- The urban Extension audience consists of people with needs unique to their environment. All Extension program areas can be utilized in addressing these needs. Consequently, urban Extension has close working relationships with all Extension Base Programs and National Initiatives.
- The Cooperative Extension System, as part of the land-grant university system, needs to prepare for and to develop formal linkages and partnerships with colleges and universities with identifiable urban missions, and to enhance programs through collaboration.
- Efforts should be made among private and governmental agencies at all levels to raise awareness of the Cooperative Extension System's ability to deliver educational programs to diverse urban audiences.
- Extension programs conducted in urban areas are and will continue to be a part of the Cooperative Extension System.

These assumptions provide a basis for the articulation of outcomes, goals, objectives, and strategies in support of the Urban Extension vision and mission.

Realizing the Vision

The urban Extension outcomes, goals, objectives, and strategies support the urban Extension vision and mission by providing broad programmatic focus and structure. It is expected that these planning tools will be adapted as necessary for use in individual situations.

Outcomes

The outcomes listed below emphasize settings in which people value and use community-focused learning and accept responsibility for their own well-being as well as that of their families and communities. The outcomes specify desired results of Extension programs focused on individuals and families, neighborhoods, environments, and the workforce.

Outcome 1: Healthy individuals and families. Individuals and families will develop the capacity to function in a satisfying and productive manner. People who participate in urban Extension programs will experience and report positive changes—physically, emotionally, socially, and economically.

Outcome 2: Healthy neighborhoods. Individuals and families will take on the responsibility to create viable neighborhoods. Neighborhood stability will contribute to an enhanced quality of life.

Outcome 3: Healthy environments. Individuals and families will develop and support their physical environment by engaging in decisionmaking that affects their environment positively.

Outcome 4: A healthy workforce. Individuals and groups will optimize their productivity in the workforce and in the workplace.

Programs focus on healthy individuals, families, and environments.

Goals

The goals, objectives, and strategies listed on the following pages promote an optimal infrastructure for the realization of the outcomes as well as—ultimately—the vision and mission for urban Extension.

Urban Extension must expand its fiscal and nonfiscal resources.

Goal 1: Expand the resource pool by using a variety of means to support existing and ongoing Cooperative Extension educational efforts in urban settings.

Objective 1: Maintain and expand public funding from federal, state, and local sources.

Strategies:

- Practice effective accountability.
- Identify sources of funds.
- Emphasize partnerships and collaboration in seeking funds.
- Encourage collaboration among adjacent localities.

Objective 2: Expand and sustain resources through appropriate grants, agreements, contracts, and fee structures.

Strategies:

- Coordinate fundraising efforts.
- Clarify policies concerning fee-for-service for Extension.

Objective 3: Develop and sustain appropriate nonfiscal resources that improve work environments; attract and support volunteer and citizen engagement; leverage greater in-kind contributions and other resources; encourage staff development; and improve physical facilities.

Strategies:

- Develop multilocation approaches to program delivery.
- Identify nonfinancial resources essential to programs.
- Develop strategies for local resource sharing.
- Encourage use of distance education.
- Develop performance standards for Extension educators in urban environments.
- Develop employment criteria for urban Extension staff.
- Develop recognition for successful urban Extension education.
- Expand staff development opportunities for Extension educators working in urban environments.

Objective 4: Expand urban networks.

Strategies:

Develop a national urban network.

- Seek systemwide commitment to support an urban network.
- Encourage ECOP interest and support for an urban Extension network.
- Work with the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) to build networks with land-grant and urban universities.

Networks must be supported and expanded.

Goal 2: Develop and support partnerships among public and private agencies, groups, and organizations who share a common urban vision.

Objective 1: Serve as a catalyst for convening agencies, groups, and organizations addressing urban issues. Groups may include but need not be limited to urban universities; colleges and community colleges; land-grant universities; businesses; governments; service organizations; and citizens' organizations.

Strategies:

- Plan and conduct national, regional, state, and local conferences and meetings with other appropriate agencies and organizations to facilitate communication, dialogue, and action.
- Identify appropriate groups with whom to work on areas of mutual interest.

Objective 2: Identify and nurture relationships that support a common vision of community-focused learning for individuals, families, businesses, and interest groups.

Strategies:

- Focus partnership strategies on outcomes.
- As part of a collaborative relationship, identify the diverse strengths and distinct roles of each partner, and agree on the roles each should play.
- Use staff exchanges (i.e., sabbaticals and internships).

- Use effective methods of communicating about partnerships and outcomes.

Goal 3: Enhance and advance the urban education knowledge base for Extension professionals as well as for organizations, businesses, and interest groups.

CES needs to enhance the knowledge base for urban Extension professionals.

Objective 1: Extension will build access to research-based knowledge.

Strategies:

- Cooperate and communicate with individuals and groups who conduct applied urban research.
- Participate in applied research with a variety of partners, including institutions within and outside the land-grant system, community-based agencies, and additional organizations and individuals.
- Organize a system for accessing and retrieving knowledge.

Objective 2: Use performance objectives and indicators specific to urban audiences and environments to measure outcomes.

Strategies:

- Develop and use statements of desired outcomes, goals, and impact indicators that are applicable across all urban areas.
- Link objectives and measurements with reporting requirements (e.g., per the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993) as appropriate.

Goal 4: Expand awareness of metropolitan and urban issues, and define the role of Extension and its partners in addressing these issues.

Objective 1: Develop market strategies that target audiences and communicate outcomes and impacts.

Strategies:

- Create a national urban Extension marketing committee.

- Conduct staff development in marketing techniques.
- Seek public testimony on successful urban Extension programs.
- Work with communications media to spotlight Extension efforts nationwide.
- Link with university outreach efforts.

Objective 2: Develop public relations strategies that promote Extension in urban areas.

Strategies:

- Conduct staff development in public relations.
- Seek funding for public relations activities.
- Work with marketing consultants to promote urban Extension.

Goal 5: Inform, educate, and influence decisionmakers with the potential to impact policy development for urban residents.

Objective 1: Increase awareness of urban issues.

Strategies:

- Interpret and analyze information about urban issues.
- Develop electronic "action alert" systems (e.g., through Internet).
- Identify and work with key contacts in other agencies and organizations.
- Submit timely articles on urban issues to the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) newsletter and the NASULGC newsletter.
- Monitor the *Congressional Record* and *Federal Register* for legislation concerning urban issues.
- Organize and participate in public hearings related to urban issues.
- Participate in national conferences of mayors, county officials, governors, cities, representatives of urban and land-grant universities, and other groups.

Urban Extension must inform, educate, and influence decisionmakers.

Objective 2: Influence decisions and policy that support constructive resolution of urban issues.

Strategies:

- Develop impact papers on high-priority urban issues to demonstrate "bang for the taxpayer's buck."
- Coordinate communication with decisionmakers on issues affecting urban audiences.
- Develop political support networks.
- Identify advocacy groups for urban Extension.
- Encourage a regular flow of information among CSREES, ECOP, NASULGC, and federal agencies (e.g., the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Education, and Justice).
- Recommend a person knowledgeable in urban Extension education for membership on the Legislative and Budget Committees of ECOP.
- Establish an advisory committee to work with the Urban Extension National Program Leader.
- Ensure that urban Extension issues and program impacts are included on the organizational agendas of CSREES, ECOP, NASULGC, State Extension and Research Directors and Administrators, and other collaborating groups.
- Develop a list of appropriate urban Extension personnel and clients who can be called upon to respond effectively to requests for legislative testimony.
- Increase congressional awareness of urban Extension programs.

Advocacy groups for urban Extension must be identified.

These goals, objectives, and strategies are intended to demonstrate various ways in which urban Extension can focus its efforts. They are in no way meant to be prescriptive. Each urban Extension professional is encouraged to adapt these items as necessary and to develop additional ones as individual circumstances warrant.

The Outlook for Urban Extension

The list of pressing urban issues that have been and could be successfully impacted by strengthened urban Extension programs is long. To be effective, however, Extension educators must recognize and understand a number of trends that offer both road blocks and opportunities for urban Extension programs. These trends are historical, political, financial, and legal in nature.

Historical and Political Trends

Since its inception, Extension education has been highly successful in supporting agriculture and natural resource management and in enhancing the lives of youth and families in rural areas. Because of this strong rural emphasis, however, urban Extension educators face the challenge of convincing often-skeptical audiences that Extension has an important role in urban areas.

Since the Extension System was originally established, the distribution of the American population has changed dramatically. At the turn of the century, the majority of the U.S. population lived in rural areas. Now, an overwhelming majority of the population resides in suburban or urban areas. The urgent problems the Nation faces increasingly center on urban issues. Yet, Extension is seldom thought of as a lead agency in addressing urban challenges.

Intertwined with historical factors are political realities. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is, by definition, focused on agriculture. Many of its programs are strongly influenced by the provisions of the Farm Bill. The administrative structure in which Extension functions reinforces this rural emphasis. The federal Cooperative Extension unit is housed within the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture. Approximately half of the state Extension Services report administratively to colleges of agriculture in land-grant institutions. Although some of Extension's most important work is conducted with nonrural audiences, most colleges of agriculture are reluctant to surrender control over state Extension services.

The Nation's urgent problems increasingly center on urban issues.

Universities nationwide are "reaching out" to communities.

Resources

In an era of constrained resources, support for Extension programs has been reduced. As a result, Extension professionals often find themselves under increased pressure to find alternative sources of funding. Although much emphasis is placed on maintaining relationships with other organizations in order to obtain support from grants and contracts, Extension employees find themselves under pressure to maintain their focus on "traditional" audiences.

Networking and Advocacy

Current Extension advocacy networks and support groups are largely concerned with agricultural and natural resource issues. In contrast, no organized networks have yet been established specifically to support urban Extension programs. However, urban programming has been and will continue to be a strong component of the total Extension program.

Although land-grant and urban universities have not often worked together to serve urban audiences, NASULGC leadership has expressed support for closer connections between Cooperative Extension and urban universities. In addition, universities nationwide are "reaching out" to communities through various outreach and extended education programs. As these new relationships develop, a greater appreciation of the need for urban Extension is expected to result.

Legislation and Policy

Legislative and policy development provides another area of challenge for supporters of urban Extension programs in that the major legislative mandates emphasize agriculture. As noted earlier, the Farm Bill has a strong influence on USDA and subsequently on federal Extension policies, practices, and program support. Formula funding under the Smith-Lever Act is influenced by the number of farms and the size of the rural population.

Prospects for Change

There is a growing recognition that urban audiences have special needs that can and should be addressed by the Extension System. For example:

- NASULGC leaders have expressed the belief that today's research university may be tomorrow's public service university—with the assumption that urban audiences will be among the citizens served.
- Universities are increasing their outreach efforts and are calling on Extension to fill an expanded role.
- Other federal agencies are also expressing interest in working with Extension to meet the needs of diverse audiences.
- ECOP is placing more emphasis on the importance of serving urban audiences.
- Public support for an urban network is gaining momentum.

Support for an urban network is gaining momentum.

In a climate of increased competition for resources, it is important to avoid divisive debates such those focused on "rural vs. urban" concerns. Rural and urban communities are mutually interdependent, and Extension programs should continue to reflect this fact. In expanding its service to all audiences, Extension can continue to provide invaluable education and service to the Nation's citizens.

A Call to Action

*It is time to strengthen
Extension efforts in
urban areas.*

Strong, visionary leadership is needed throughout the system to build on strengths and capture opportunities in urban Extension. It is time to call national attention to the fact that Extension is delivering successful issue-based programs to diverse audiences—including those who are socially, educationally, and economically disadvantaged—in many major urban areas. In addition, it is time to increase and enhance Extension's efforts in urban areas. For this to occur, several things must happen:

- Effective partnerships with other educational, service, and business organizations interested in or addressing urban and metropolitan concerns are essential.
- Increased communication must be fostered between urban Extension and organizations representing cities and with elected officials from urban and metropolitan areas.
- Greater linkages through networks of Extension professionals working in urban environments will expand capacity. Important topics for sharing include methodologies and programs unique to city audiences; development of data useful in carrying out programs; ways to enhance opportunities for staff development; ways to facilitate partnering among county Extension units separated by state lines or considerable distance; and updates on the activities of federal agencies.
- USDA and the Cooperative Extension System must continue to recognize and support the fact that Extension's mission includes urban and metropolitan audiences.
- Financial support for metropolitan work must increase through collaboration with Congress and other federal agencies. In addition, more funding sources should be identified in state, county, and city governments. Effective communication links must be developed to facilitate this process.

The Extension System urgently needs to build and expand programs for urban audiences. This document provides a framework to assist Extension professionals in accomplishing programmatic goals in a manner consistent with the urban Extension vision, mission, and values.

Acknowledgments

The efforts of the individuals listed below are acknowledged in the preparation of *Urban Extension: A National Agenda*.

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Special appreciation is due the following individuals, who facilitated the preparation and critical review of this document.

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Jim Christenson	Director, Arizona Cooperative Extension (manuscript review)
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