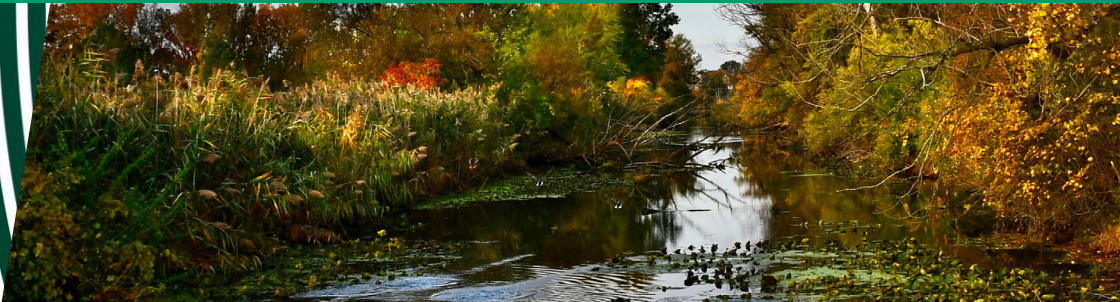


MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

Extension



# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION 2024 STRATEGIC DIRECTION PLAN



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## *Thank You*

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- » MSU College of Agriculture & Natural Resources Events Management Team
- » MSU Extension Communications Team
- » MSU Extension Educational Materials Team
- » MSU Extension Director's Office Support Team

We also thank our colleagues throughout the organization who covered our other organizational roles and responsibilities when this work occasionally took priority.

We are grateful to the MSU Extension Director's Office for the opportunity to serve MSU Extension and the state of Michigan in this endeavor. We look forward to seeing the accomplishments and effects resulting from this process for years to come.



# FROM THE DIRECTOR



*Dear Readers,*

Opinions differ about when Michigan State University Extension truly got its start. Was it in 1907, when what was then known as State Agricultural College hired its very first livestock field agent? Or in 1912, when the state legislature authorized Michigan county boards of supervisors to appropriate funds and levy taxes to support teaching and demonstrations in Extension work? How about 1914, when the Smith-Lever Act created the Cooperative Extension System, based in land-grant universities?

No matter the year, we all can agree that MSU Extension has a rich and storied history of serving the state, its residents, its businesses, and its communities.

In summer 2023, driven by our unwavering commitment to serve and empower the people of Michigan, MSU Extension began a strategic direction planning process. We started with four goals:

- » To build a bold strategic vision that will guide our work for years to come and ensure we remain the trusted organization that delivers flagship programs like 4-H and SNAP-Ed.
- » To become nimbler, more responsive to the needs of Michigan residents, and endlessly innovative.
- » To collaborate with our farmers and food producers to educate our communities about being strong and reliable stewards of our natural resources.
- » To enhance the quality of life for all Michigan residents.

This comprehensive strategic planning process was led by a diverse, dedicated team of Extension professionals who hold positions and roles across the organization and come from across the state. The team spent months leading listening sessions throughout Michigan, conducting in-depth interviews and surveys, analyzing the information they gathered, and writing this plan—all with the intent to assess where we are, identify what we do well, and uncover opportunities for improvement.

Through this effort, the team collected more than 25,000 comments—each data point an invaluable piece of the puzzle needed to create this strategic vision.

As we unveil this plan, our hopes and dreams for the future are clearer than ever: To strengthen our impact, broaden our reach, and deepen our relationships within the communities we serve.

I am honored to share with you this 2024 MSU Extension Strategic Direction Plan, which will guide us in writing the next chapter of the organization's ongoing history.

Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to MSU Extension's mission. Together, we will continue to make a difference and shape a brighter future for Michigan.

*With gratitude,*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Quentin Tyler".

**Quentin Tyler, Ph.D.**  
Director  
Michigan State University Extension



## About MSU Extension

Michigan State University Extension is the university's community outreach organization, linking people across the state to the vast knowledge and resources of MSU.

We serve individuals, families, businesses, and communities in every one of Michigan's 83 counties, where our dedicated professionals provide people with educational programs and essential tools for their personal and professional growth.

Our food and health programs focus on empowering individuals and families to make healthier lifestyle choices. Guided by a commitment to equity, our health classes and resources go beyond just helping participants understand the importance of things like nutritious food and improved mental health—we aim to tackle health disparities and enhance the overall well-being of communities across Michigan, ensuring healthier futures for everyone.

We offer farmers and the agriculture industry access to innovative research and technologies, and to best practices for enhancing their farms' productivity and sustainability. From crop management and soil health to pest control and livestock care, MSU Extension provides comprehensive support to help the agriculture industry thrive and support the robust agricultural system in our state.

MSU Extension supports resilient, sustainable communities, from local food systems to the protection of natural resources. Our initiatives promote and educate about the production, distribution, and consumption of locally grown food, strengthening the connection between

farmers and consumers. MSU Extension also works to empower people as they help their own communities realize their full potential—for example, by facilitating community development collaboratives or providing leadership training.

Designed to nurture the next generation of leaders and innovators, our children and youth programs support parents, caregivers, and volunteers in encouraging participants to explore their interests, set goals, and work toward achieving their dreams. Through programs like 4-H, MSU Extension helps young people develop essential life skills like leadership, communication, and critical thinking—ultimately inspiring young Michiganders to become active, engaged adults who contribute positively to their communities for years to come.

We foster and celebrate innovation, inclusivity, and a culture of belonging. Accordingly, we value every member of our organization as we help Michiganders excel in their jobs, raise healthy and safe families, improve communities, and empower young people to dream of successful futures.

Whether it's supporting the dedicated people who drive the state's agricultural economy, helping young people develop leadership skills, teaching people how to effectively manage chronic illnesses, or empowering entrepreneurs to realize their dreams, MSU Extension has been a force for good in the state for over 100 years.

In short, we help young people, adults, families, businesses, and communities transform and improve Michigan every day.

## Who We Serve

In its mission to bring the resources of Michigan State University to people across the state, MSU Extension serves an array of audiences. From bustling city centers to quiet rural towns, we have a presence in every county and offer programming and resources tailored for a range of audiences.

It is important for us to acknowledge and define that wide range of audiences. When we use or write “people” or “Michiganders,” we mean children and young people, adults, seniors, families, parents, farmers, business owners, local leaders,

policymakers, veterans, gardeners, hobbyists, and more.

Likewise, when we use or write “communities,” we are recognizing all types of communities, from those that coalesce around shared interests, identity, and culture, to those that are made up of neighborhoods, regions, and local and tribal governmental bodies.

We hope to reach as many people as possible with this strategic vision—ensuring that everyone feels seen and heard in it, while honoring their unique needs and differences.

## About the Process


In June 2023, a diverse, 28-member Strategic Direction Work Team began to develop a roadmap for the future of Michigan State University Extension. Their goal was to create a vision that:

- » Shows the MSU Extension of the future, one that reinforces our commitment to being a values-driven organization that engages partners and communities in addressing Michigan’s greatest challenges.
- » Unifies MSU Extension professionals in a common mission and empowers us to find how we can use our individual strengths and passions to make a positive impact.

- » Confirms MSU Extension’s position as a leader in the next generation of Cooperative Extension work.

The team began the information-gathering process with in-person public and staff listening sessions at eight sites around the state: Detroit, Troy, East Lansing, Marquette, Grayling, Frankenmuth, Muskegon, and Kalamazoo. The sessions were designed to gather input from a diverse group of people on the current state of MSU Extension—what was working well, and what opportunities for improvement existed. The team hoped the information they collected





in the sessions would help determine how the organization could better serve Michigan for years to come.

To invite broad participation, the sessions were promoted on the MSU Extension website, social media accounts, and email newsletters, during workshops and events, and across the personal and professional networks of faculty, staff, partners, and community organizations. These efforts prompted local and statewide media outlets (television, radio, digital, and print) to run stories about the listening sessions.

The sessions were open to everyone. Young people, adults, community and statewide partners, MSU Extension-affiliated faculty and staff, and community members attended. At each listening session, participants shared their perspectives and insights about driving forces, current realities, and what a thriving MSU Extension of the future would look like.

To reach people who weren't able to attend a local session, the work team led virtual listening sessions for the public and for MSU Extension employees. They also conducted online surveys in English and Spanish and invited youth input through the surveys.

In addition to the listening sessions and surveys, members of the Strategic Direction Work Team and others completed in-depth interviews with:

- » Representative youth and adult program participants.
- » Longtime community partners.
- » Industry leaders.
- » Leaders from higher education and similar organizations from Michigan and across the U.S.

As with the listening sessions and surveys, the interviews were designed to collect information to help shape MSU Extension's future priorities and

services from people who already know about and work with MSU Extension and from people who might want to collaborate with us in the future.

Overall, nearly 700 people submitted more than 25,000 comments about MSU Extension through the public and staff engagement processes. As the team worked in February 2024 to review and summarize this feedback, they also heard from the four MSU Extension institute directors about the current structure and focus of the institutes. They considered feedback about MSU Extension's greatest strengths and current challenges, and visionary statements for the ideal Extension service of the future.

Throughout the data collection and synthesis process, team members were mindful of:

- » MSU Extension's Shared Values (enacted in 2018; [canr.msu.edu/od/directors\\_office](https://canr.msu.edu/od/directors_office)), which arise from our clients' and partners' expectations, the organization's position as part of Michigan State University, and our federal mandate to serve all.
- » MSU's statement of values, found in the Mission and Values ([strategicplan.msu.edu/mission](https://strategicplan.msu.edu/mission)) section of the 2030 MSU Strategic Plan ([strategicplan.msu.edu](https://strategicplan.msu.edu)) website.

The team identified several broad themes related to external trends and forces, organizational strengths and growth areas, and the future of the organization. After thorough discussion, they agreed on:

- » Refinements to MSU Extension's shared values statements, which are intended to lead the organization in everything we do.
- » The four most critical strategic initiatives for future MSU Extension programming.
- » The four most important operational goals for MSU Extension's organizational development.



## Our Mission Statement

Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives, families, businesses, and communities by connecting them to the vast knowledge and educational resources of MSU.

## Our Shared Values

A set of shared values has long been the foundation of MSU Extension's work. Through what we have learned from the strategic direction process, we refined our value statements to better communicate the attributes of our people, our work, and our processes.

## Our People Are . . .

- » **Trustworthy and authentic.** MSU Extension professionals and volunteers will demonstrate the utmost honesty and dependability and hold themselves and each other accountable to these high standards. We don't just welcome diverse perspectives, we seek them out, listen empathetically, and strive to grow in self-awareness and self-reflection. Because of this, the communities we work with can trust us to show up for them, and to connect our audiences with other organizations when MSU Extension cannot meet their needs.
- » **Welcoming and respectful.** In our programming, partnerships, and staffing, we are dedicated to welcoming everyone and fostering respect in every environment. We will cut through barriers and foster a true sense of belonging across our organization. We will meet people where they are and respect and value differences as we continuously work to expand our reach to include all audiences.

## Our Work Is . . .

- » **Creative and innovative.** As problems and challenges evolve, so must our solutions. Recognizing that what we currently know is not all there is to know, we support our

professionals and communities in the challenging and rewarding process of seeking greater understanding and solving complex problems in creative new ways. We will be fearless as we try fresh solutions and encourage our colleagues and partners to join us in innovation.

- » **Transparent and accountable.** We strive to be a values-driven organization, upholding integrity and excellence in all we do. As such, transparency and accountability are cornerstones of our work and processes. We recognize the tremendous responsibility we hold as a community service organization and seek to live up to the trust placed in us by Michigan businesses, residents, and families.

## Our Processes Are . . .

- » **Research and evidence based.** In every aspect of our service, we will remain firmly rooted in scientific methods and evidence-based knowledge. For our innovative programs and resources to achieve their goals, they must be reliable and born of sound research. No matter the program, MSU Extension staff members will ensure their work can be fully trusted and relied on, because it is evidence based.
- » **Collaborative and inclusive.** We know that our best work is achieved when everyone has a voice. By listening and taking part in two-way information sharing, we work together for the good of Michigan individuals, families, businesses, and communities. As an accessible network embedded in Michigan's rural, suburban, and urban communities, we will partner with communities to help them make the most of their assets, discover new opportunities, and help empower people to thrive.





## Trends & Forces

Whether social, political, environmental, or technological in nature, new trends and forces will change the way our clients, partners, communities—and our organization—function. The listening sessions, surveys, and interviews that were part of the strategic direction process helped us identify the trends and forces outlined in this section. They are likely to affect Michigan young people, adults, families, businesses, and communities—and our programming with each of these groups—over the next ten years.

### Demographic Shifts

Michigan's shifting demographics, most notably an aging population and urbanization, are causing population loss. Evolving family structures also have profound implications for the workforce and economy, social supports and public services, volunteerism, and housing. These changing population trends will significantly affect the educational needs, social development, and future economic prospects of Michigan's children and young people.

### Changes in the Workforce

Workforce changes that are driven by technological advancements, economic transitions, industry trends, evolving workplace conditions and preferences, higher staff retirement and turnover rates (with the consequent loss of institutional knowledge), and workforce misalignment can leave businesses, governmental units, and other organizations understaffed.

### Economic Disparities

Economic consolidation, characterized by the growth and dominance of larger corporations and the loss of competitiveness of smaller ones, contributes to widening wealth disparities and challenges economic inclusivity. This consolidation is felt geographically too, with many

urban areas controlling more resources and wealth, and rural areas clamoring for investment. Increases in the cost of living, coupled with economic and income disparities, demand comprehensive strategies to address systemic inequalities.

### Social & Political Polarization & Loss of Civility

The rising tide of social and political polarization poses a significant threat to societal cohesion and effective governance. Advances in communication, particularly in digital spaces, create the potential for greater connection, but also the potential for ideological differences and divisive narratives to increase conflict and diminish dialogue. This can hinder society's ability to constructively discuss—let alone solve—even the most fundamental challenges of our time.

### Civic Disengagement & Isolation

Declining rates of civic engagement and positive in-person social interaction challenge the fabric of democratic societies. Civic disengagement and isolation, worsened by factors such as technology and social media use, fewer communal gathering spaces, and lingering isolation from the pandemic, will present continuing challenges in the next ten years.

### Pace of Technology Change & Adoption

The rapid pace of technological change and adoption, and challenges such as misinformation and the digital divide leave businesses, organizations, communities, and individuals in a constant state of flux. People are continually forced to integrate and evolve or risk being left behind, isolated, and disadvantaged.

## Artificial Intelligence

The rapid advancement and integration of artificial intelligence, or AI, into various aspects of daily life brings transformative opportunities and disruptive effects, and raises ethical concerns. The impact of AI on the workforce, education, and privacy—and which sources and what information we trust—requires our thoughtful attention. Striking a balance between harnessing AI’s potential for facilitating innovation and addressing its societal implications is essential.

## Climate Change & Water Issues

The intertwined challenges of climate change and reduced water quantity and quality will be critical concerns for the next decade and beyond. Future generations of Michiganders will feel the escalating effects of climate change in years to come. Humans urgently need to adapt and cope with these effects while also implementing sustainable practices across all sectors of society and the economy to ensure resiliency.

## “One Health” & Sustainability

The concept of “One Health” emphasizes the interconnectedness of environmental, plant, animal, and human health. It considers zoonotic diseases, climate change, food security, and sustainable agriculture. To achieve “One Health,” we must adopt sustainable practices that address environmental issues and ensure the well-being of all living organisms. Emerging diseases (such as COVID-19 and highly pathogenic avian influenza) that affect animals, plants, and humans highlight the importance of proactive health measures.

### What Is “One Health”?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention definition of “One Health” (<https://www.cdc.gov/one-health/about/index.html>) is:

*“A collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach—working at the local, regional, national, and global levels—with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.”*

## Public Health & Mental Health Concerns

Public health challenges in the next decade include worsening trends in life expectancy, poorer outlooks for physical and mental health (particularly for younger people), and gaps in health care access. Factors such as lifestyle changes, environmental stressors, and societal pressures contribute to these issues.

## What It All Means

Make no mistake: The hurdles that the trends and forces outlined in this section pose are daunting. But they also create exciting opportunities for MSU Extension to help Michiganders navigate these complex times with confidence and optimism.

With a presence in every county, MSU Extension is poised to help individuals, families, communities, and businesses across the state overcome pressing issues, from economic disparities to health concerns. The unique nature of our organization and our dynamic programs position MSU Extension as a positive force in building a resilient and vibrant future and overcoming ever-evolving challenges. Given the strengths and mission of our organization, the operational goals outlined in this plan will better position MSU Extension to deliver on our new strategic initiatives to address the greatest challenges facing Michigan.



## Organizational Strengths

As a community outreach organization, MSU Extension plays a unique role in the lives of people and organizations across the state. This section discusses the broad range of organizational strengths stakeholders identified during the strategic planning process that MSU Extension can build on in the future.

### Foundation in Evidence-Based Knowledge & Research

Our foundation is built on evidence-based knowledge and research—that is, information grounded in science. Science involves using various areas of knowledge (known as a transdisciplinary approach), following reliable methods, and building on what we already know to ensure that the information we share is trustworthy. MSU Extension makes this information accessible to everyone, with the goal of helping people make informed decisions that are right for them.

### Youth Development

Our focus on youth audiences and the adults who support them helps ensure that young people are safe, healthy, and prepared for successful futures. We acknowledge the importance of youth-adult partnerships and make space for, facilitate, and encourage youth voices and involvement in communities and decision making. We help develop and empower young people to become leaders today and tomorrow.

### Breadth of Programs, Tailored to Audience Needs

We offer an array of core programs, along with innovative programs developed in response to emerging needs. Our programs are open to all and are learner centered to maximize their value and impact. They are designed to address the most pressing information needs and interests of individuals, businesses, and communities, using their preferred delivery modes.

### Partnerships & Collaborations

Our work is built on relationships. We listen and work together for the good of Michigan communities, including our state's 12 federally recognized tribes. We partner with those we serve to identify research and education needs, and work to respond to those needs. Sometimes we lead, sometimes we follow, and sometimes we empower and work alongside others. No matter our approach, we aim to authentically show up for all people.

### Professional & Dedicated Staff

Our staff are friendly, responsive, collaborative, and committed to the work and purpose of MSU Extension. These dedicated experts share current information in their disciplines and are knowledgeable about the local areas they serve. Our staff are facilitators, connectors, and supporters, fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose among diverse communities.

## A Network Rooted in Community & Campus

MSU Extension works throughout Michigan—from rural areas to big cities, and everywhere in between—with staff serving all 83 counties. Our programs draw on evidence-based knowledge gained through the university’s research and creative activities, teaching and learning, service, practice, and leadership. MSU Extension is firmly rooted in community and campus, creating a strong campus-community connection.

## Dedicated Volunteers Who Extend Our Work to Broader Audiences

Dedicated volunteers are at the heart of MSU Extension’s service in communities, lending their time and talents to extend the reach of our programs. They are trained, screened, and vital to our work.

## A Place Where Everyone Belongs

MSU Extension is dedicated to ensuring that everyone, from our staff members to our program participants, feels a sense of belonging. We honor this commitment to inclusiveness by fulfilling requests for accommodations to meet individuals’ needs and by keeping the principles and practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion at the center of all aspects of our work.

## Trusted Reputation

Trust is a vital element in developing and maintaining the relationships and environments it takes to build strong and safe communities. MSU Extension knows that trust is hard to earn, easily lost, and once lost, even harder to reestablish. We don’t take our reputation as a trustworthy organization for granted, and we strive to uphold that reputation in all that we do.



## Vision

MSU Extension provides young people, adults, families, businesses, and communities throughout Michigan with the evidence-based knowledge they need to realize a healthy, thriving, and sustainable future. Our work contributes to thriving Michigan food systems; strong Michigan communities; healthy, empowered, and fulfilled Michiganders; and resilient Michigan and Great Lakes environments for current and future generations.



## Strategic Initiatives

Using the strengths of MSU and our organization to tackle the challenges facing Michigan young people, adults, businesses, and communities is at the core of what we do. Our mission, vision, and day-to-day work are driven by this commitment. This section describes the four strategic, or key, initiatives that arose from the recently completed MSU Extension strategic planning process:

- » Thriving Michigan Food Systems
- » Strong Michigan Communities
- » Healthy, Empowered, and Fulfilled Michiganders
- » Resilient Michigan and Great Lakes Environments

The description of each initiative is followed by a set of associated goals and subgoals. All are framed by our federal land-grant mission, the resources of MSU and MSU Extension, and our organizational mission and values. With these assets, and a commitment to incorporating youth voice, we will develop innovative, transdisciplinary programming that will help realize these visionary goals.

### Thriving Michigan Food Systems

Thriving food systems are crucial to Michigan's prosperity—supporting farmers, creating jobs, and stimulating economic growth across various sectors. Additionally, a strong agricultural system ensures food security for residents, promotes sustainable environmental practices, and enhances the overall quality of life for everyone in our state.

MSU Extension will continue to play a central role in developing stronger food systems by providing farmers with the latest evidence-based knowledge, research, and innovative farming techniques; offering innovative educational programs on sustainable practices, food safety, and market development; helping to strengthen local food networks; and improving community access to nutritious, locally grown foods.

**Michigan's interconnected, thriving food and agricultural system supports healthy, meaningful lives built on trust and transparency.**

- » Agriculture is profitable and supports meaningful, preferred, and diverse careers.
- » Consumers are knowledgeable about, feel connected to, and value Michigan agriculture.
- » Michiganders provide and have access to a secure supply of safe, healthy, and affordable food and agricultural products.

#### **Michigan agriculture is resilient.**

- » Michigan agriculture continues to improve production efficiencies.
- » Michigan farms adapt to our changing climate.
- » Farmers engage in farm transition and succession planning for the future.
- » Michigan agriculture explores and adopts emerging technologies to improve operational efficiency and increase farm profitability.

#### **Michigan's food and agricultural workforce is skilled and prepared.**

- » Young people learn about and prepare for desirable and successful food- and agriculture-related careers through life skills education and career exploration.
- » Accessible educational resources reduce barriers to entry and support new and aspiring farmers.
- » Farm and agricultural businesses hire and retain well-trained, skilled, and knowledgeable employees.

#### **Michigan farmers are good stewards of water, soil, and wildlife habitats.**

- » Michigan agriculture promptly addresses the effects of emerging and endemic pests in plants, animals, and humans.
- » Michigan agriculture employs evidence-based management practices that support environmental stewardship.

- » Michigan agriculture partners in advancing the industry through on-farm research and Extension-led outreach.

## **Strong Michigan Communities**

Michigan is only as strong as its communities and people. Ensuring young people, adults, businesses, and communities can thrive and adapt to changing circumstances is critical for our state's success—whether they are overcoming challenges or seizing new opportunities.

MSU Extension is instrumental in realizing a future with resilient, stable, dynamic communities by developing strong, dedicated youth and adult leaders, fostering civic engagement, and supporting community and economic development in rural and urban settings. We will also provide educational and facilitative support to help address unique social, economic, and environmental challenges, fostering a sense of stewardship and collaboration among community members.

#### **Current and emerging leaders have the skills and confidence they need to create inclusive solutions to the challenges of the day.**

- » Young people and adults are prepared to lead with skills that foster personal reflection and growth and work collaboratively across differences.
- » Government, nonprofit, and for-profit boards and committees practice effective models of governance, goal setting, meeting management, and organizational management to achieve their organizational missions and carry out their short-, medium-, and long-term plans.
- » Communities and organizations partner, collaborate, and use inclusive and effective processes to leverage their collective assets and achieve shared goals.

**Michiganders are prepared for and adaptable in the face of emerging issues, opportunities, and events.**

- » Individuals and families are prepared for extreme events and other disruptions and practice effective coping skills to promote well-being and resilience.
- » Businesses, organizations, and communities develop comprehensive plans to be resilient to climate impacts and other unexpected shocks and events.

**Communities use their built and natural assets to contribute to active, healthy lifestyles, strong economies, and overall quality of life.**

- » Individuals and families can pursue active lifestyles, healthy food choices, and more resilient, sustainable living.
- » Families, businesses, and organizations make informed decisions about the design and planning of buildings, homes, and community spaces; landscape design and plant selection; and the management and maintenance of lands to protect natural resources and enhance green infrastructure.
- » Communities and resource managers protect important natural features and employ best practices for developing and maintaining green infrastructure and recreational facilities that improve safety, experiences, and quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

## Healthy, Empowered & Fulfilled Michiganders

Health and well-being are multifaceted and interdependent concepts. When Michiganders are supported in all aspects of their health and well-being, they are better equipped and empowered to engage fully in their lives, relationships, and communities, to pursue their educational and career goals, and to adapt to life's challenges.

MSU Extension offers educational programs for young people, families, and adults that empower them to seek health equity and well-being, including mental health, physical wellness, financial literacy, vocational readiness, and beyond. MSU Extension can help young people and adults build solid foundations by helping them develop stress management practices, promoting nutritious diets, and encouraging sound financial practices. These efforts will ultimately contribute to a stronger, more vibrant Michigan.

### What Is “Health Equity”?

*“Health equity is the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health. Achieving this requires focused and ongoing societal efforts to address historical and contemporary injustices; overcome economic, social, and other obstacles to health and healthcare; and eliminate preventable health disparities.”*

~ About Health Equity ([bit.ly/4dp3aqE](https://bit.ly/4dp3aqE)), U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2024)



**Michiganders have access to and support for their basic needs. They feel physically and emotionally well and safe and are financially capable and independent.**

- » Young people, adults, and families know how to access the resources they need to secure basics like shelter, food, and clothing.
- » Young people, adults, and families know how to access and prepare safe, healthy foods.
- » MSU Extension collaborates with partner organizations to ensure Michiganders have access to and take part in educational programs that empower them to name their needs and improve their lives.
- » Individuals and families manage their resources to reach financial independence.
- » Businesses, organizations, and communities follow best practices for financial sustainability.

**Michiganders are healthy and resilient and develop supportive relationships with others.**

- » Young people, families, and adults practice wellness using mental health education, mindfulness practices, and stress management techniques.
- » Young people, families, and adults employ skills in self-awareness, social engagement, interpersonal relations, caregiving, leadership, and conflict resolution to pursue healthy relationships.
- » Michiganders pursue active lifestyles with ample opportunities to move, walk, bike, roll, paddle, and so on, using community transportation networks, parks, and outdoor recreation and natural spaces.

**Accessible, nonformal educational resources and experiences empower Michiganders to improve their lives by advancing personal, professional, and vocational goals, interests, and development.**

- » Educational resources and experiences engage young people and adults in their own development and prepare them to make important life decisions by helping them develop the confidence and skills that will help them succeed.
- » With support from caring adults, young people explore established and emerging careers that meet their interests and passions.
- » Michiganders pursue lifelong learning for continual growth and personal resilience.





## Resilient Michigan & Great Lakes Environments

At the core of Michigan's identity is a premier natural environment that is embodied by the Great Lakes. This environment shapes the state's geography, culture, and economy. It provides recreational opportunities, supports diverse ecosystems, and plays a crucial role in commerce, industry, and tourism.

MSU Extension is poised to play a key role in promoting a healthy and resilient environment across Michigan and the Great Lakes region. We can achieve this by sharing evidence-based knowledge on conservation and restoration, offering educational programs on sustainable practices, supporting local environmental initiatives, involving young people in place-based stewardship efforts, and enhancing public access to—and appreciation of—natural resources.

### **Michiganders are environmentally literate and practice environmental stewardship.**

» Young people and adults connect their learning to local issues through appreciation of uniqueness of place; hands-on learning; youth-community partnerships; and democratic experiences related to environmental stewardship.

» Businesses and communities plan and make decisions that support environmental stewardship.

### **Michiganders enhance, sustain, and protect the Great Lakes, inland waters, forests, land, soil, and ecosystems.**

» Resource managers and landowners use the latest science, tools, and services to make informed conservation decisions that enhance the environment.

» Businesses, organizations, and communities partner to help maintain and protect Michigan habitats, landscapes, and other environmental resources.

### **Michigan communities prepare for and adapt to severe weather and climate disruptions.**

» Communities, landowners, and natural resource managers use land, water, soil, and property management practices that minimize exposure and maximize resilience to weather- and climate-related hazards.

» Communities and natural resource managers understand risk and are prepared for potential coastal and inland climate-related hazards.

» Partnerships with other organizations support vulnerable populations that are most exposed to the effects of climate change.



## Operational Goals

To tackle Michigan's greatest challenges most effectively, MSU Extension needs to address several key internal operational challenges. During the information gathering process, the work team asked the public and staff to (a) name aspects of MSU Extension that are not working so well, and (b) describe what a thriving MSU Extension would look like. Analysis of the responses led to four significant operational goals:

- » Tell our stories and market our services effectively.
- » Deliver innovative cross-institute programming to address Michigan's greatest challenges.
- » Attract and retain highly talented people who want to make a career with MSU Extension.
- » Streamline business and programming systems, align policies and processes, and create support solutions.

These goals are interconnected, critical to supporting the work and professional fulfillment of all staff, vital to achieving our mission, and tied to the organization's overall ability and capacity to address Michigan's greatest challenges.

The description of each operational goal is followed by one or more subgoals or strategies we can use to measure our progress on them.

### Tell our stories & market our services effectively.

Raising awareness about the value of our work goes beyond the need to attract the attention of and support from potential volunteers, donors, and partners. Without effective marketing and storytelling, MSU Extension cannot reach the countless people whose lives could be improved through the services, programming, and resources we offer.

Throughout the strategic direction process, stakeholders repeatedly noted the success of many of our current marketing and communications efforts. They also pointed out ways we can extend the reach of these efforts, leading to stronger community connections, increased resources, and new relationships and partnerships. These new methods and opportunities will help us reach new audiences and expand our impact as we deliver on MSU Extension's mission to address the greatest challenges facing Michigan.

The subgoals associated with this operational goal follow:

- » MSU Extension uses effective externally focused marketing efforts, supported by cohesive messaging and communications assets.
- » MSU Extension has efficient internally linked communications and marketing services, processes, and assets for use by all staff.
- » Integrate MSU Extension's marketing and communications support into program planning teams to increase programming reach and impact.



## Deliver innovative transdisciplinary programming to address Michigan's greatest challenges.

The strategic direction process underscored how important it is for MSU Extension to continue to address Michigan's emerging challenges to shape a brighter future for our young people, adults, families, businesses, and communities. MSU Extension's staff, programming, and expertise are varied and diverse, and we can draw on this diversity to effectively tackle complex issues and to foster collaborative problem solving and innovation.

Integrating knowledge and resources from multiple disciplines is crucial for addressing issues ranging from environmental sustainability to economic development. By working together across disciplines, MSU Extension can strengthen partnerships and foster innovation—and help ensure that communities find comprehensive solutions to their most pressing challenges.

The subgoals associated with this operational goal follow:

- » MSU Extension's teams and processes align across program areas to address Michigan's greatest challenges.
- » MSU Extension collaborates closely with researchers from MSU and other partner organizations in working to address our strategic initiatives.
- » Adapt program planning processes that prioritize addressing current and emerging strategic initiatives.

## Attract & retain highly talented people who want to make a career with MSU Extension.

Much of the feedback obtained through the strategic direction process focused on MSU Extension's incredible staff members. But attracting and hiring highly talented and dedicated people is just the first step. It is clear that we must step up our efforts to retain staff members after hiring.

Retention is not a given after a person is hired. We must cultivate an environment in which employees feel appreciated, supported, and inspired to serve their clients and communities—and to build their careers in MSU Extension.

MSU Extension can adopt more efficient hiring processes, improve onboarding experiences, and offer greater opportunities for professional advancement. In alignment with MSU guidelines and policies, MSU Extension can create an unparalleled community-based work environment that leads the way in employee satisfaction and retention through all career phases and positions. This improved work environment will in turn lead to a more dynamic organization that is better equipped to meet the diverse needs and challenges Michigan communities face.

The subgoals associated with this operational goal follow:

- » Streamline MSU Extension's hiring and onboarding processes to attract and select the best candidates and prepare them for success.



- » MSU Extension supports and empowers employees to prioritize their well-being, satisfaction, and professional development.
- » MSU Extension has redefined the organization's career progression pathways and developed meaningful staff recognition methods for service, contributions, and impacts.

### Streamline business & programming systems, align policies & processes & create support solutions.

MSU Extension currently uses a variety of business and programming systems, policies, processes, and support solutions.

Internal and external stakeholders praised the breadth of MSU Extension's programming, but pointed out that inefficiencies and administrative burdens hinder programming efforts. By simplifying and making our systems and procedures as consistent across institutes as is practical, we can increase our responsiveness, reduce unnecessary workload, and help ensure consistent service delivery throughout the organization.

Streamlining our systems, processes, and policies will improve operational efficiency and empower staff to focus on more impactful work. More consistent policies and processes will create a more cohesive and agile organization.

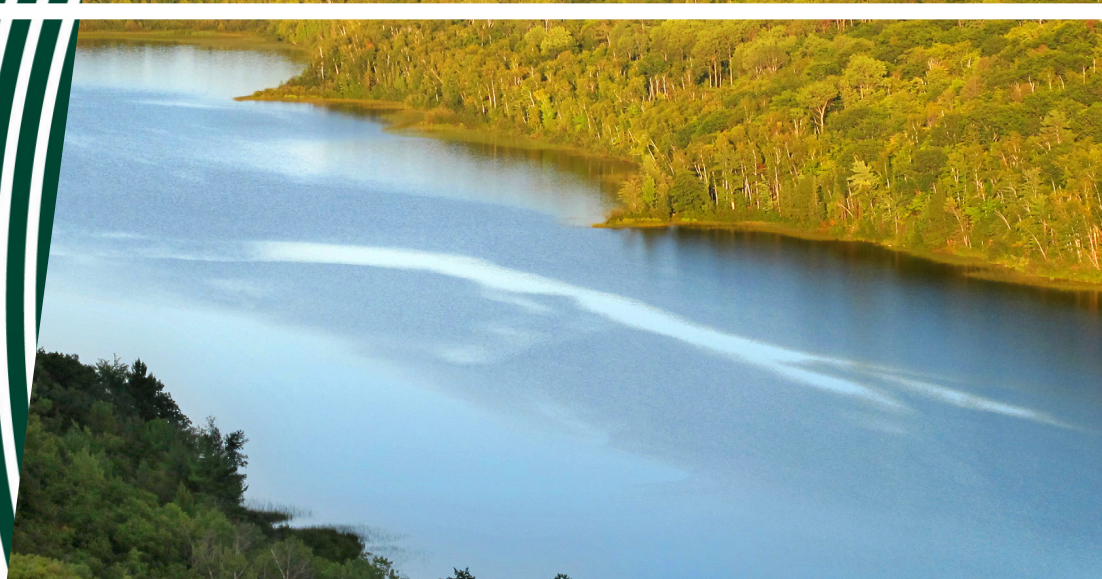
The subgoals associated with this operational goal follow:

- » MSU Extension's business, technology, and program systems will be efficient, and processes will be nimble and responsive to clients, partners, and staff.
- » MSU Extension continuously seeks input from our diverse partners and improves our effectiveness and efficiency in working with them.
- » MSU Extension staff at all levels are engaged in advancing the organization and are empowered to suggest solutions to problems they have identified and to act to improve programs, partnerships, and outcomes.

#### What Are "Support Solutions"?

When we use the term "support solutions" in this document, we're referring to staffing, services, and tools that help MSU Extension professionals carry out the core functions of their jobs and help our organization run smoothly. These include things like communications and administrative support and technology tools and support—all things that contribute to the efficient, effective work of all staff.





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