Important Findings from 2006 and 2016 Needs Assessment Process:

- All Areas addressed by MSU Extension are high priorities for communities as identified by over 10,000 Michigan residents.
- Personal priorities were found to significantly relate to community priorities.
- Personal characteristics such as gender and rural/urban audiences were found to significantly relate to community priorities.
- Customers had high levels of satisfaction with MSU Extension that significantly increased between 2006 and 2016.
- Community priorities significantly related positively to levels of satisfaction with MSU Extension.

Planning

Planning is based on community needs, work team plans, individuals, resources, research and evidence based information. The focus of MSU Extension’s work is being Proven, Relevant and Life Changing as this process moves through an annual cycle as shown below with utilization of evaluation information informing the next cycle.

Needs Assessment

Needs assessment for MSU Extension is a never ending process at many different levels that range from the general public to specific audiences using mixed methods to collect quantitative and qualitative information. This process not only gathers information, but also provides many mechanisms for feedback, especially for advisory groups, partners and stakeholders. Methods used have been focus groups, surveys, town meetings, advisory group meetings, and more. To better understand new and underserved audiences, more emphasis was placed in 2016 to reach out more to non-rural non-customers. Analyses of this data found personal priorities and characteristics may significantly influence community priorities with personal priorities appearing to be the stronger factors. Further understanding of these factors may help Extension to become more relevant to a larger general audience.
In both 2006 and 2016, Promoting workforce preparation and development and Ensuring Michigan has a plentiful and safe food supply were the top priorities as shown below. Needs Statements provided more detail and support for these areas as shown on the left.

Informative qualitative statements from Needs Assessment Process.

Needs Statements

- (Need an) abundant supply of fresh unprocessed foods.
- Conducting research and educational programs that do not rely on chemicals or GMOs to combat diseases and pests that threaten the health of plants, animals, and people.
- Safe practices to protect bees and other pollinators.
- Rebuild the neighborhoods & inner city instead of just downtown.
- Protecting our water and our farms.

Evaluation Statements

- As a young farmer I find value in MSU Extension in its unbiased role in guiding and aiding in my farm production and processes.
- I work in community health improvement, and MSU Extension has proven to be the most valuable of all of the community partners.
- I liked it because it taught children responsibility and it keeps them active in the community.

Evaluation

Evaluation is critical in examining how well MSUE’s services and programs addressed needs and priorities. Satisfaction scores were high for both 2006 and 2016 (86.7 % and 90.2% respectively) with a significant 26% decrease in the percentage of people rating neutral, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied (from 13.3% to 9.8%). A Stepwise Regression found community priorities (research and educational outreach, community development, agriculture, food safety and supply, and youth development) and time significantly related to customer satisfaction. Evaluation of satisfaction scores and feedback statements (on the left) support MSUE is relevant and effective. Institute Work Teams have taken this feedback and data to change their plans that have included things like more research and education on food systems, GMO’s, pollinators, career exploration, water sheds, financial literacy, reaching new and underserved audiences, and more.