

FAQs for Local Government and Media Inquiries



Michigan State University (MSU) Extension staff members can use the following language to respond to questions frequently asked by government and media representatives:

Key messages:

- MSU Extension helps people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses.
- Programs and services are grounded in evidence-based information from MSU and beyond.
- MSU Extension is the community-based educational arm of Michigan State University in partnership with county governments.
- We are uniquely positioned to forge partnerships with public and private agencies and organizations.
- We have the capacity to leverage local funds to secure additional federal, state and grant funding.
- MSU Extension programs annually leverage significant support in volunteer hours to serve local community needs.
- We represent a deliberative and historically successful public investment in transforming lives.

Q: I've never heard of MSU Extension. What is it?

A: For more than 100 years, MSU Extension has helped grow Michigan's economy by equipping Michigan residents with the information that they need to do their jobs better, raise healthy and safe families, build their communities and empower their children to dream of a successful future. MSU Extension is the community-based educational arm of Michigan State University in partnership with county governments. MSU Extension's emphasis is on providing the highest quality evidence-based educational programming focused on meeting the needs of our local communities.

Our staff members throughout the state are linked to MSU and have access to research done by MSU AgBioResearch scientists and other MSU researchers and faculty members as well as land-grant university researchers from across the nation. This unbiased research ensures the quality and integrity of MSU Extension programs. Our vast network of educational professionals offers a wide variety of programming throughout the state. Our educational focus areas include 4-H and youth development, agriculture, business and economic development, community development, family well-being, food and health, lawn and garden, and natural resources.

Q: Why is it important to have MSU Extension in my county?

A: MSU Extension is mission driven to help people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses. We work with counties to ensure that our education matches up with community needs.

We have ready access to educational resources that address the needs of local constituents. Examples include educational resources on food and agriculture, youth development, land use and water quality issues, community development and family nutrition. In addition, we work with entrepreneurs to help them develop value-added, consumer responsive products in the agriculture and natural resources sectors that help bring jobs and profitability to communities.

(If given the opportunity, walk through program areas on the [MSU Extension website](#).)



Q: Where does the money come from for MSU Extension?

A: The core funding for MSU Extension is a three-way funding partnership between federal, state and county governments. Staff members often seek out additional funding from public or private grants, partnerships and philanthropy to target a particular community need. Federal dollars are appropriated through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. State dollars are appropriated through Michigan’s higher education budget. Locally, our county board of commissioners allocates monies to support MSU Extension programming. The funding from the county is extremely important and further ensures that our programs meet local needs.



Q: Why should MSU Extension be publicly funded? Aren’t there similar organizations that do much of the same thing with private funding?

A: As part of the nation’s land-grant university cooperative Extension program, MSU Extension represents a strategic public investment in improving people’s lives. There is no free market incentive to provide residents, families, businesses and farmers with unbiased research and educational programming to help them make decisions that will improve and enhance their life or business. *(Provide local examples as appropriate.)*



Additionally, MSU Extension leverages local funds to secure state, federal and, in many cases, private dollars. *(Provide examples of how local funds have leveraged other dollars.)*

4-H has historically represented a carefully considered public investment in our young people. Unlike most youth development programs, 4-H is available and accessible to all young people in this county aged 5 to 19. Also unlike most youth development programs, 4-H has the flexibility and nimbleness to develop activities, initiatives and programs that mirror the unique needs and interests of a particular county. *(Provide local examples as appropriate, such as life skills, civic engagement, leadership development, workforce preparation, geocaching, robotics, camp, teen leadership, etc.)*



In <name of county> County, we reach <number of 4-H members> youth in clubs and an additional <number of other youth engaged in programming> in other youth programs.

The value that 4-H brings to the community can also be measured in the value the volunteers bring. In <name of county> County, we have <number of 4-H volunteers> volunteers that provided <number of volunteer hours> volunteer hours last year. If you put a monetary value on the value of the volunteer service, the 4-H return on investment increases.



The same case could be made in some of the larger counties around Master Gardener volunteers.

Visit the Independent Sector website (<https://independentsector.org>) for the current nationally recognized dollar value of volunteer time to calculate the value of MSU Extension volunteer contributions.

Q: Does MSU Extension duplicate programs that other agencies offer?

A: MSU Extension works with state and local agencies to develop educational programs that enhance the services those agencies provide. For example, MSU Extension staff members partner with other agencies, such as the county Department of Health and Human Services, to add the all-important educational component to what these organizations offer. Some programming at the county level takes place through agreements made at the state level.

For example, in SNAP-Ed, MSU Extension staff members teach recipients how to shop for and prepare healthy meals. Another example is our first-time homebuyer program that helps people make informed decisions when choosing and financing a home.

Q: How would local budget cuts affect MSU Extension?

A: MSU Extension has a more than 100-year history of working with our historical and critical county government partners. This partnership exists due to a shared funding model that includes federal, state and local county funding that is supplemented by grants, contracts and other external sources. *(Share how this core funding helps to leverage dollars and other resources through partnerships and grants. Talk about the return on investment from state and federal dollars.)*

Should a county find itself unable to fund MSU Extension due to significant financial circumstances, we will work with that county to identify other resources. We will remain committed to the partnership until a mutually agreeable long-term funding environment is created. *(Talk about the impact our programs have on the local community.)*

This approach validates that MSU Extension is a committed partner working statewide in each of Michigan's 83 county jurisdictions. Limited or no funding will result in difficult decisions related to staffing and available programming for local residents including a reduced 4-H presence.



Published in September 2015 and updated January 2020 by the MSU Extension Strategic Connections Team

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