

FAQS for Local Government and Media Inquiries



Key Messages:

- Michigan State University (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 research- and 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.
- We have the capacity to leverage local funding to secure volunteers hours.
- 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, Michigan State University (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 research- and evidence-based educational programming focused on meeting the needs of our local communities.

Our staff members throughout the state are linked to Michigan State University 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 focus areas include 4-H and youth development, agriculture, business and economic development, community development, family education, food and health, lawn and garden, and natural resources.

Q: Why is it important to have 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 at www.msue.msu.edu.)





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 targeting 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 Extension programming. The funding from the county is extremely important and further ensures that our programs meet local needs. MSU Extension does an excellent job of leveraging local funds to secure state, federal and, in many cases, private dollars.



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

A: As part of the nation's land-grant university cooperative Extension program, MSU Extension represents a carefully considered public investment in improving people's lives. As you know, 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.

Let me give you some examples. (Provide local examples as appropriate.)



Additionally, MSU Extension does an excellent job of leveraging local funds to secure state, federal and, in many cases, private dollars. Again, allow me to give you one or two examples of this leveraging in our county.

(Provide local examples as appropriate, such as SNAP-Ed, EFNEP, Cooking Matters or Project GREEN.)

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. 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. In our county, for example, we have programs in ... (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 sort of case could be made in some of the larger counties around Master Gardener volunteers.

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, food stamp-eligible families receive coupons to buy locally grown produce through the Women, Infants and Children program's Project FRESH, and MSU Extension educators teach the 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 will continue to successfully provide as many programs as possible within the budget parameters. If local funding were to be completely eliminated, all programming in that county (including 4-H) would cease. (Provide local example that emphasizes the impact on programs, not on staffing.)

We will continue to use dollars wisely. (Note the leveraging of dollars and other resources through partnerships and grants. Talk about the return on investment with state and federal dollars.)

In fact, in <name of county> County, we continued to meet needs and transform lives after budget cuts. (Be prepared with case studies of programs that have transformed lives.)

I personally know of an individual whose life was positively affected by one of our programs. (Client testimonials are a powerful tool to get this point across. However, never give out specific names unless you have the consent of the individual, family or business involved.)

Right here in <name of community>, I've seen the tremendous impact MSU Extension has made. (Talk about the impact our programs have on the local community.)



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Ray Hammerschmidt, Interim Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. WCAG2.0AA