

# CRITICAL ISSUES FACING UTAH RESIDENTS

## Results of a County Commissioner and Councilmember Survey

### WHAT IS USU EXTENSION?

USU Extension is a partnership between Utah State University, county governments and the federal government. USU Extension has served all 29 counties in Utah for over 100 years. Extension faculty provide numerous services and programs to the members of their communities. They address needs by providing research-based, non-biased information to the public.

USU Extension monitors community needs to develop relevant non-formal educational programs to address critical issues. Strong communication between county government and other stakeholders to identify relevant and timely needs is necessary to facilitation community development. Utah elected officials were asked to identify critical issues relating to agriculture, water resources, youth development, and more. USU Extension has the capacity to develop and deliver programs to address these issues.

### WE ASKED, YOU SHARED YOUR CONCERNS

In January of 2021, an online questionnaire was emailed to all County Commissioners and Councilmembers throughout Utah. A total of 72 responses were received from 28 counties. Commissioners and Councilmembers were asked questions pertaining to their perceptions of critical issues and needs in their counties. A follow up phone survey was also facilitated with a few participants. All responses were anonymous, and data were compiled into statewide results and split into rural and urban counties. The following shows some of the results from this project.

#### Critical Issues for Extension as Identified by Elected Officials

-  Assisting farmers in agricultural production and profitability
-  Preserving agricultural farmland
-  Protecting water quality
-  Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and life skills
-  Strengthening local food system
-  Youth mental health and teen suicide prevention
-  Helping rural communities improve their quality of life
-  Managing and protecting rangelands
-  Strengthening workforce readiness and entrepreneurship
-  Ensuring safe food handling practices to prevent foodborne illness

#### Overall County Commissioner & Councilmember Perception of USU Extension

- 88% of elected officials agreed that USU Extension in their county aligns with their county goals.
- 79% of elected officials agreed that USU Extension in their county reached the people who need the services of USU Extension the most.
- 94% of elected officials agreed that USU Extension makes positive impacts in their county.
- 97% of elected officials agreed that USU Extension adds value to their county.
- 70% of elected officials agreed that USU Extension provides the information they need to make important official decisions in their county.

## Top 5 Critical Issues for Extension as Identified by Elected Officials in Rural Counties



Preserving agricultural farmland



Assisting farmers in agricultural production and profitability



Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and life skills



Protecting water quality



Youth mental health and teen suicide prevention

## CONTINUING THE HISTORY OF RURAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Top concerns from Utah's rural communities include preserving farmland, assisting farms, and creating opportunities for youth. USU Extension continues to be a primary service to our farmers and ranchers. Most recently, USU Extension teamed up with the Farm Bureau to meet COVID-19 hunger issues through the Farmers Feeding Utah Project. Additionally, 4-H and youth development programs empower youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults and volunteers.

## MEETING THE NEEDS OF URBAN COMMUNITIES

While traditional Extension programs focus on rural and agricultural issues, USU Extension is actively serving audiences in suburban and urban areas. Extension provides programming on a range of topics to meet the diverse needs of all individuals, such as nutrition, mental health and wellbeing, and economic development. Create Better Health (CBH) is one example, it serves individuals and families that are either food insecure or at risk of food insecurity. CBH teaches individuals how to prepare healthy food choices on a limited budget. By using information generated through university research, USU Extension has the ability to help urban and suburban communities preserve natural resources, as well as educate community members and leaders on food and nutrition, urban agriculture, and environmental wellbeing.

## Top 5 Critical Issues for Extension as Identified by Elected Officials in Urban & Suburban Counties



Protecting water quality



Strengthening local food system



Assisting farmers in agricultural production and profitability



Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and life skills



Protecting air quality

## MOVING FORWARD

USU Extension works to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities in Utah by providing educational programs and resources. For more information on your local county Extension programs, please reach out to your local USU county director. You can find location information at [extension.usu.edu/locations](https://extension.usu.edu/locations).

To learn more about the impact of Extension on communities across Utah, please visit [digitalcommons.usu.edu/oig/](https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/oig/).