



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

EXTENSION
FOUNDATION

MISSION

Our mission is to empower a national network of community-based educators, volunteers, and partners to turn knowledge into real-world solutions for stronger communities and people.

VISION

We envision a nation where university research and local knowledge work hand-in-hand, and where those who connect communities and academia have the resources to drive local change. We see a future where everyone has access to proven tools that improve their lives and strengthen the communities around them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is the Extension Foundation?..... 1

Board of Directors.....2

Staff.....3

Letters From the Chairman of the Board and the CEO.....4

Membership6

Partnerships8

Funding9

Statement of Financial Position 10

Extension AI..... 12

National Program Impacts 14

 NEXTGEN..... 14

 FADI-EDEN..... 15

 PSEFMP 16

 EXCITE..... 17

 NTAE 18

 Program Action Teams 19

 AGRIPROSPECTS..... 20

Building Capacity, Developing Professionals..... 22

Building a National AI Strategy 26

How Can We Help You?..... 28

WHAT IS THE EXTENSION FOUNDATION?

All universities engage in research and teaching, but the nation's 112 Land-grant Universities and Colleges, including Historically Black Land-grant Universities and Tribal Colleges, share a third essential mission: EXTENSION.

EXTENSION is how universities connect their research and expertise directly to communities through practical, non-formal education that helps people solve real-world challenges.

The Extension Foundation is the national 501(c)3 nonprofit partner to the U.S. Cooperative Extension system. It strengthens the national system by providing the programs, tools, and professional development needed to expand its reach and impact. Through this work, the Foundation advances a shared mission: to empower a nationwide network of community-based educators, volunteers, and partners to turn knowledge into real-world solutions for stronger communities and people. Land-grant university Extension services invest in the Extension Foundation as members; in 2025, the Extension Foundation returned an 806% dollar-for-dollar return on that investment connecting Cooperative Extension with funding to deliver critical local programs nationwide in health, workforce development, and technology.

The Cooperative Extension System (CES) activates this mission at scale by engaging individuals, families, and communities to build skills, strengthen local economies, improve health, and enhance quality of life. With thousands of professionals embedded in counties nationwide and more than 2 million volunteers, Extension reaches every state and U.S. territory, ensuring that trusted, research-based knowledge is accessible where it matters most.

Working in partnership with public and private organizations, CES serves as a national infrastructure for translating science into action—delivering locally relevant solutions to complex challenges in agriculture, health, workforce development, technology, and community resilience.

Looking ahead, the Extension Foundation is guided by a clear vision: a nation where university research and local knowledge work hand-in-hand, and where those who connect communities and academia have the resources to drive meaningful local change. In this future, everyone has access to proven tools and trusted guidance that improve lives and strengthen the communities around them. ■



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

VOTING MEMBERS

1994 REGION

Mr. Brian Kowalkowski *Chair*

Dean of Continuing Education
College of Menominee Nation

SOUTHERN REGION

Dr. John Anderson *Vice Chair/Secretary*
Senior Associate Vice President for Agriculture-Extension,
Director of the Cooperative Extension Service
University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture

WESTERN REGION

Dr. Vicki McCracken *Treasurer*
Associate Dean & Director of Extension
Washington State University

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

Dr. Charles Stoltenow
Dean and Director, Nebraska Extension
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

1890 REGION

Dr. Tiffany Franklin
Vice Chancellor for Extension and Outreach
Southern University Agricultural Research and
Extension Center

NORTHEASTERN REGION

Dr. Erik Ervin
Interim Associate Dean and Interim Director
of Cooperative Extension
University of Delaware

EX-OFFICIO

Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP)

Bill Hoffman

Executive Director, Extension Committee on
Organization and Policy (ECOP)

USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

Gary Mayo

NIFA Government and Stake Relations
USDA-NIFA

EXECUTIVE TEAM

Dr. Beverly Coberly, *Chief Executive Officer*

Ashley Griffin, CNP, MS, *Chief Operating Officer*

Arielle Y. Smith, CPA, *Chief Financial Officer*

Sheri Young, *Executive Assistant*

STAFF

Barbara Adams, Senior Accountant

Tira Adelman, Grants & Program Manager, New Technologies for Ag Extension Project Manager

Karl Bradley, Leadership & Team Development Specialist

Regan Emmons, Partnership & Development Specialist

Julie Halverson, Evaluation Specialist

Patty Height, Grants Specialist

Megan Hirschman, Senior Government Relations & Strategic Partnerships Officer

Ruth Hursman, Project Coach, EXCITE

Molly Immendorf, Design Strategist

Brenna Kotar, Contracts and Operations Manager, EXCITE Project Manager

Lisa Linfield, Instructional Designer

Mark Locklear, Digital Systems & IT Operations Manager

Charlie Pane, Publications & Content Strategy Manager

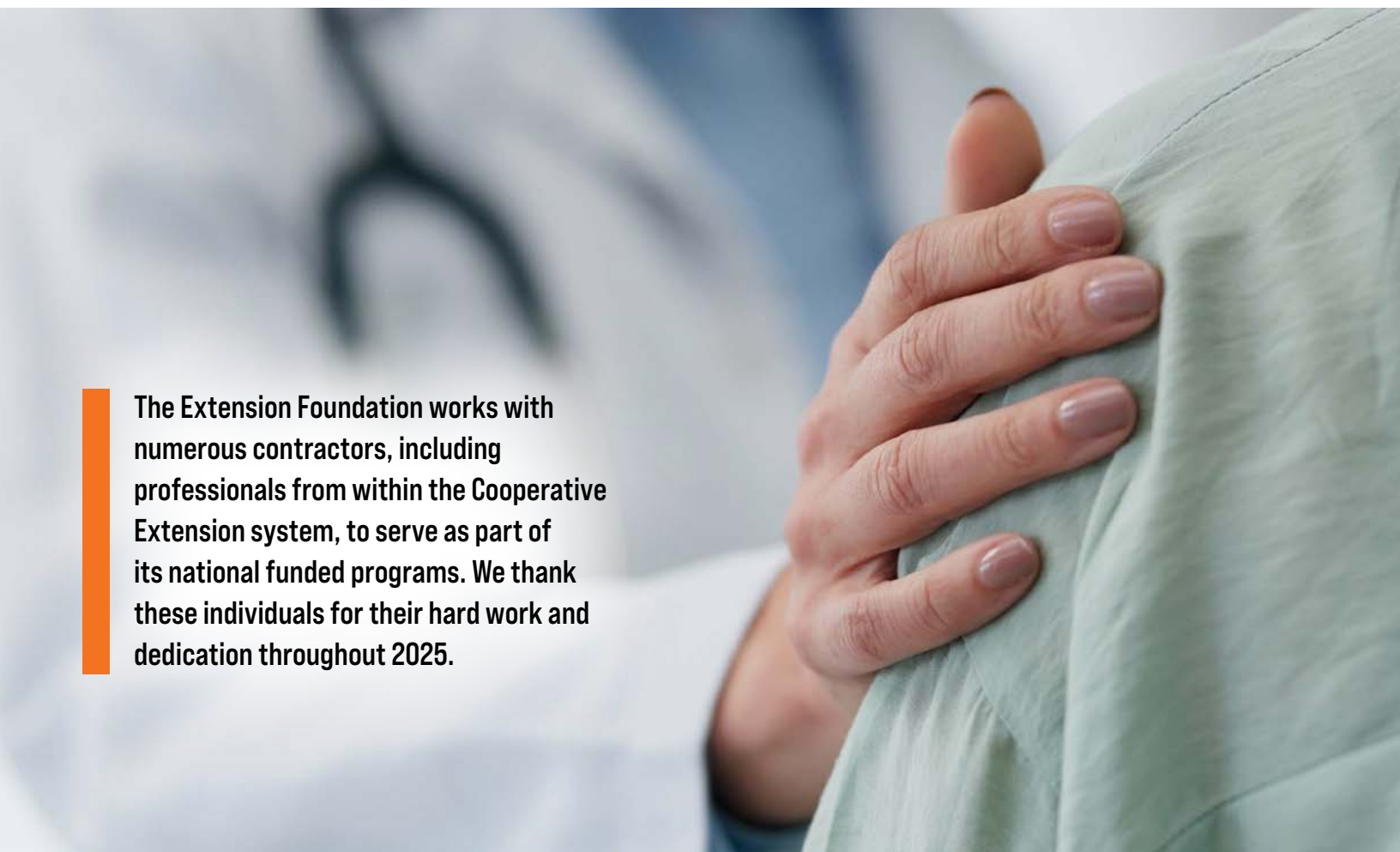
Melanie Pugsley, Communications and Professional Development Senior Associate

Dr. Michelle Rodgers, EXCITE Program Director

Vicki Stouffer, Senior Corporate and Foundation Relations Officer

Dr. Aaron Weibe, Director of Technology Services and Communications

Dr. Jason Weigle, Program Manager, AgriProspects Workforce Development Network



The Extension Foundation works with numerous contractors, including professionals from within the Cooperative Extension system, to serve as part of its national funded programs. We thank these individuals for their hard work and dedication throughout 2025.

MR. BRIAN KOWALKOWSKI

Chair, Extension Foundation Board of Directors

As we reflect on 2025, it is clear that the Extension Foundation has reached a new level of maturity in its mission to serve the U.S. Cooperative Extension System. As Dean of Continuing Education for the College of Menominee Nation, I see firsthand the value of having a national partner capable of operationalizing our collective vision. This year, the Foundation's role in supporting the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) Program Action Teams (PATs) has been transformative. By providing the management infrastructure and funding needed for these teams, the Foundation ensures that our national priorities—from economics and workforce development to health and wellbeing—are coordinated system-wide, building the capacity we need to deliver local impact at a national scale.



The strength of our system lies in our collaboration, and the value of Extension Foundation membership has never been more apparent. Through robust professional development and shared core tools like Connect Extension and the Campus learning management system, our professionals have access to the resources and peer networks necessary to modernize our service delivery. These platforms reduce duplication and allow us to focus on what we do best: turning research-based knowledge into real-world solutions for our communities.

Strategically, 2025 marked a pivotal shift toward long-term durability. The Foundation launched several new revenue-generating "sold services," including technology consulting and event management, designed specifically to fill gaps in the Land-grant system. These entrepreneurial efforts diversify the Foundation's funding and ensure it remains a nimble, courageous, and financially stable partner for years to come. I am honored to lead a Board that continues to foster this innovation, and I look forward to the continued growth of our national network

DR. BEVERLY COBERLY

Chief Executive Officer

This report reflects the impactful work of the Extension Foundation in 2025 to support Cooperative Extension professionals across the nation. The Foundation continued its role in helping states collaborate on critical national challenges, securing new funding sources, and strengthening the infrastructure required to expand Cooperative Extension's reach and impact in communities nationwide.



Building on our commitment to strong financial stewardship, the Extension Foundation returned over \$9 million in value to the Cooperative Extension System, achieving a remarkable 806% National ROI for our members. Strategically, 2025 was marked by our strengthening role as a national leader in helping Cooperative Extension responsibly adopt artificial intelligence, ensuring that AI supports Extension's public mission by prioritizing trusted, research-based information.

By the end of 2025, the Extension Foundation continued to manage its portfolio of national funded programs, driving system-wide capacity in critical areas. Our core programs—including Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching & Engagement (EXCITE), New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE), Pesticide Safety Education Funds Management Program (PSEFMP), AgriProspects Workforce Development Network, USDA NextGen Program, FADI-EDEN, and Member Services—delivered significant, measurable results, such as deploying 23 dedicated health agents for immunization education and positioning ExtensionBot as the top-performing AI chatbot for horticulture questions in the AgriBench Consortium.

The Extension Foundation remains dedicated to securing and managing national funding opportunities that empower Cooperative Extension professionals to address pressing community needs. Through these efforts, the Foundation continues to drive innovation, collaboration, and impact at scale, adopting a proactive approach to position the system for long-term success.



“This year proves that a bold vision yields tangible results. Achieving an 806% return on investment for our members is a testament to strong stewardship, but our greatest success lies in securing the future. By courageously innovating with technology like ExtensionBot, we are supporting Cooperative Extension as the nimble, trusted, and highly relevant resource our nation needs to turn research into local impact at scale.”

— BEVERLY COBERLY

MEMBERSHIP

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP INVESTMENT

\$1,125,372

TOTAL FUNDING RETURNED
(All Funding Lines + Campus)

\$9,073,140

NATIONAL ROI

806%

PROFESSIONAL & LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION

2,374

Unique Individuals

10,231

Total Registrations

279

Events Represented

PLATFORM ENGAGEMENT

7,941

Connect Extension users

709

Campus (Moodle) instructors

845

Ask Extension experts

CAMPUS (MOODLE) COURSE SALES

\$497,119

For every \$1 invested by Land-grant Universities in the Extension Foundation, the Extension Foundation returns \$8.06 dollar-for-dollar. This does not include the value of programmatic services, professional development, and more.

FUNDING RETURNED
BY REGION

\$2,919,383

1890 Region

\$1,615,506

Southern Region

\$1,486,776

Northeastern Region

\$1,267,311

North Central Region

\$1,331,936

Western Region

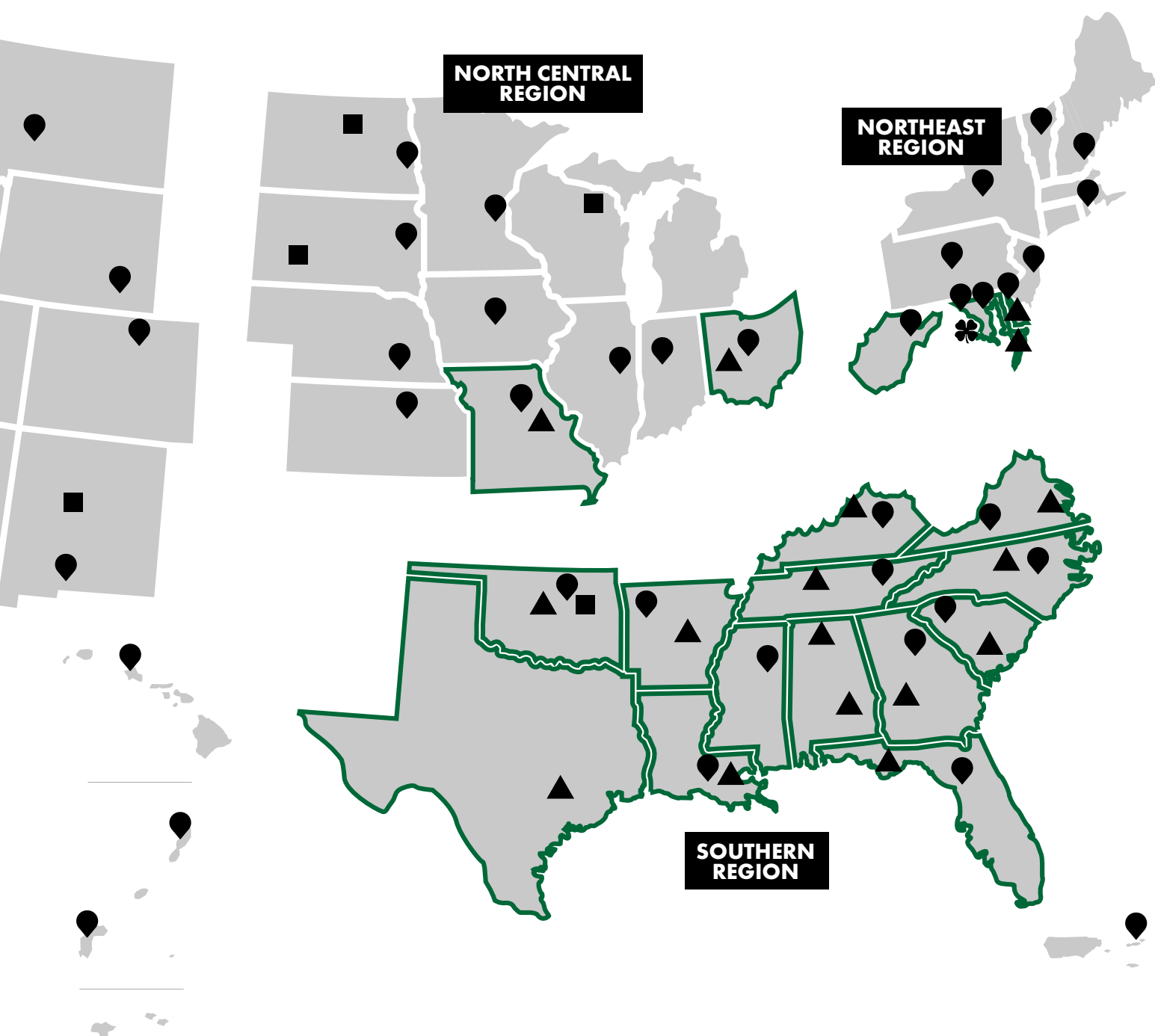
\$452,228

1994 Tribal Colleges & Universities:

NATIONAL TOTAL RETURNED

\$9,073,139.56





- 1994 Land-grant Tribal Colleges & Universities
- ▲ 1890 Land-grant Universities
- 1862 Land-grant Universities
- ♣ National 4H Council
- 1890 Region

PARTNERSHIPS

In coordination with the projects supported through our New Technologies for Ag Extension Program (NTAE), the ECOP Program Action Teams (PATs) funded more than 40 significant internal and external partnerships have been realized, including:

Broadband/ Infrastructure PAT

Southern Rural
Development Center
USDA NIFA

Health & Well-Being PAT

American Diabetes Association
American Heart Association
Board on Human Health and
Services
Cancer Institute of New Jersey
CDC
CDC Foundation
Center for Community Health
and Evaluation
Community Initiatives
Community Nutrition Education
Community of Practice
Cornell University
Journal of Community Engagement
Scholarship
National 4-H Council
National Association of Extension
Family and Consumer Sciences
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Solvable
US Department of Health and
Human Services
USDA NIFA

Resilient Communities & Lands

Association of Natural Resource
Extension Professionals
Environmental Protection Agency
Extension Disaster Education
Network
National Extension Climate Initiative
Regional Rural Development Centers
SeaGrant
US Department of Health and
Human Services
US Department of Housing and
Urban Development
USDA Agriculture and Food
Research Initiative
USDA Climate Hubs
USDA NIFA

Urban Ag & Food Systems PAT

City Girl Farms
National Urban Extension Leaders
University of Kentucky
University of Rhode Island
Urban Agriculture and Food Systems
Group (Connect Extension)
USDA
Washington State University

Workforce PAT

AgCareers.com
Eduworks
NCHEMS
University of Missouri
USDA NIFA
Virginia Tech

Partnerships are an essential component of the way the Extension Collaboration on Immunization Teaching and Engagement (**EXCITE**) functions and EXCITE has a network of over **950** partners.

These are some of the most active partnerships for 31 of the collaborating Land-grant universities in 2025.

36

INTERNAL DEPARTMENTS
OR PROFESSIONAL
SCHOOLS WITHIN
A LGU PARTNER

8

EXTERNAL UNIVERSITIES,
DEPARTMENTS, OR
PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

64

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

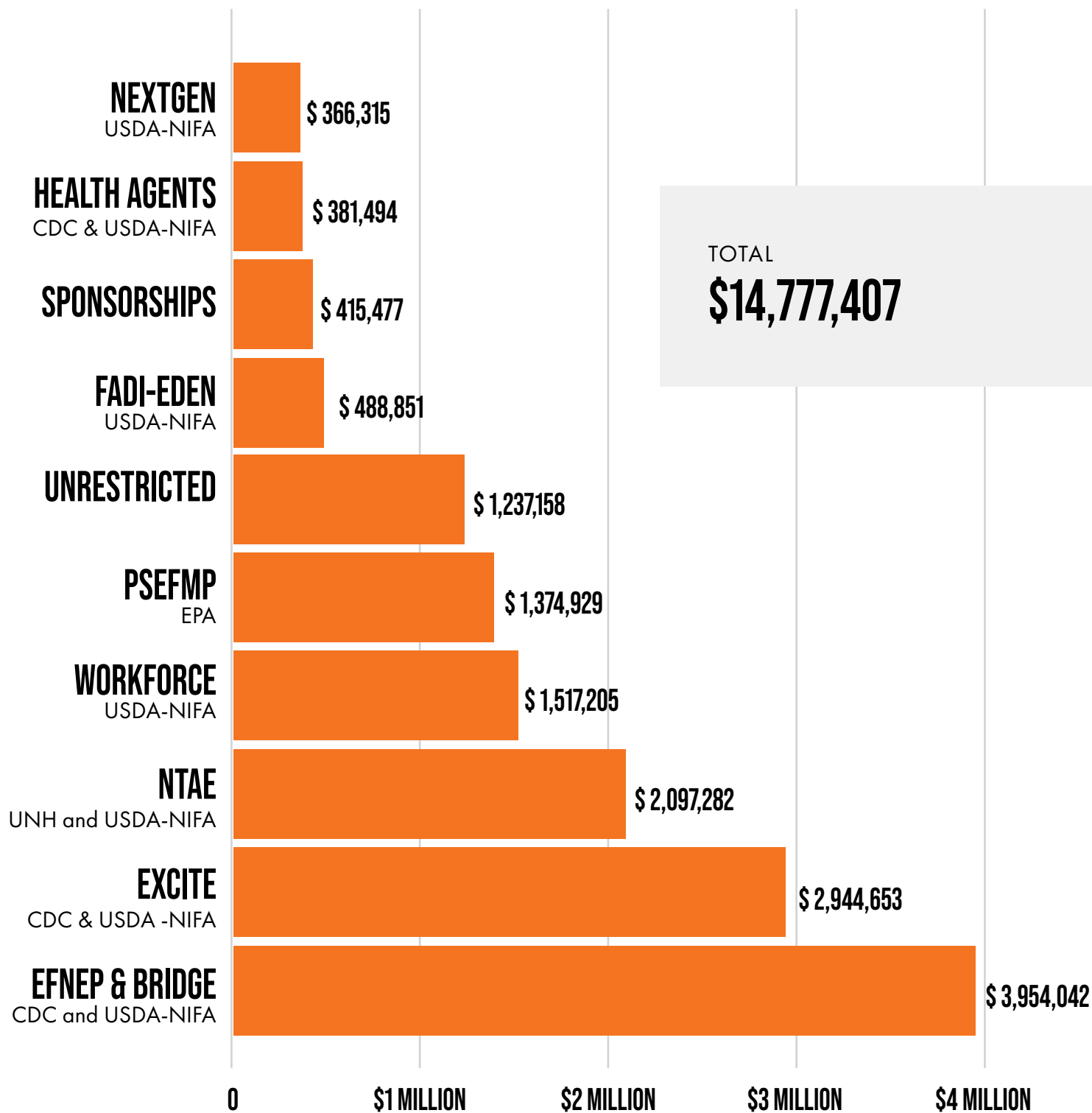
22

VACCINATION PROVIDERS

130

TOTAL

FUNDING



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Year Ended
December 31, 2025*

ASSETS

Current Assets

Cash	4,380,994
Accounts receivable	1,772,463
Prepaid expenses	169,697
Total current assets	6,323,154

Total Assets6,323,154

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities

Accounts payable	639,437
Credit Cards	15,192
Total current liabilities	1,371,337

Net Assets

Total net assets4,950,776

Total Liabilities and net assets6,323,154

ACTIVITES

	UNRESTRICTED	FADI-EDEN	EFNEP & Bridge	EXCITE	Health Agents
Ordinary Income/Expense					
Gross Profit	\$1,237,158.00	\$488,851.00	\$3,954,042.00	\$2,944,653.00	\$381,494.00
Expense					
Funded Projects	75	182,949.00	2,815,774.00	2,131,879.00	167,211.00
Operations	259,665.00	12,643.00	166,160.00	23,570.00	4,650.00
Participant Support (PSC)	1,269.00	3,207.00	54,075.00	-	-
Staffing	766,868.00	94,586.00	423,022.00	235,214.00	117,245.00
Subcontracts	109,691.00	95,842.00	16,113.00	39,845.00	-
Tools and Services	73,218.00	5,311.00	2,587.00	4,408.00	-
Travel	93,093.00	49,872.00	40,068.00	40,206.00	242
Total Expense	\$1,303,879.00	\$444,410.00	\$3,517,800.00	\$2,475,123.00	\$289,347.00
Net Ordinary Income	-66,721.00	44,441.00	436,242.00	469,530.00	92,147.00
Other Income	4,747.00	-	-	-	-
Net Income	-\$61,974.00	\$44,441.00	\$436,242.00	\$469,530.00	\$92,147.00



	Sponsorships	NEXTGEN	NTAE UNH	Workforce	PSEFMP	TOTAL
	\$1,264,263.00	\$366,315.00	\$2,097,282.00	\$1,517,205.00	\$1,374,929.00	\$15,626,193
	\$64,226.00	-	491,372.00	657,181.00	1,068,460.00	7,579,127
	\$131,015.00	942	18,011.00	459,405.00	17,938.00	1,093,999
	\$66,606.00	17,062.00	71,617.00	18,888.00	-	232,724.00
	-	195,723.00	847,653.00	288,526.00	191,642.00	3,160,480
	\$268,847.00	70,580.00	184,985.00	2,785.00	6,013.00	794,700.00
	-	2,372.00	322,846.00	4,288.00	4,134.00	419,163.00
	\$29,158.00	25,371.00	160,799.00	7,947.00	408	447,164.00
	\$559,852.00	\$312,050.00	\$2,097,282.00	\$1,439,021.00	\$1,288,593.00	\$13,727,357
	\$704,412.00	54,266.00	-	78,184.00	86,336.00	1,898,836
	-	-	-	-1,000.00	-	3,747.00
	\$704,412.00	\$54,266.00	\$ -	\$77,184.00	\$86,336.00	\$2,185,215

* These unaudited figures will be updated after the 2025 audit is complete in fall 2026.

Throughout 2025, the Extension Foundation continued to strengthen its role as a national leader in helping Cooperative Extension understand, evaluate, and responsibly adopt artificial intelligence. This work has centered on a clear priority: ensuring that AI supports Extension’s public mission by expanding access to trusted, research-based information while keeping Land-grant universities, Extension professionals, and local communities at the center of the process.

A major milestone in 2025 was the Foundation’s national study of AI in Cooperative Extension. The 2025 National AI Report provided an important snapshot of how Extension Directors and Administrators are thinking about artificial intelligence, including opportunities, concerns, readiness, and the support needed to

move forward responsibly. The study helped identify areas where national coordination can make a meaningful difference, including practical AI guidance, shared infrastructure, professional development, policies, and tools designed around Extension’s unique role as a trusted public knowledge system.

ExtensionBot has been a central part of this work. Developed as an AI-powered tool grounded in Extension publications and Land-grant university resources, ExtensionBot is designed to help the public find reliable answers more quickly while also helping Extension organizations make better use of the knowledge they already produce. Over the past year, ExtensionBot continued to advance in both scale and capability, supporting tens of thousands of interactions and expanding the number of institutional content sources available through the system. Its performance has also shown strong promise in external benchmarking efforts. As part of the AgriBench Consortium, led by the University of Illinois Center for Digital Agriculture,



ExtensionBot was evaluated alongside other AI tools and commercial models and emerged as the top-performing chatbot for horticulture questions.

The Foundation also began exploring sustainability models for specialized versions of ExtensionBot. In 2025, the Extension Foundation was awarded funding by the United Soybean Board to develop an integrated pest management-specific version of ExtensionBot. This project creates an opportunity to test how ExtensionBot can be adapted for priority content areas, commodity groups, and partner-supported use cases while maintaining its connection to trusted Extension knowledge.

The Foundation has also focused on positioning ExtensionBot as more than a chatbot. It is becoming part of a broader AI and data infrastructure that can help Extension organize, discover, and deliver information across programs, institutions, and audiences. Through related work with MERLIN and national content indexing, the Foundation is building the foundation for more responsive tools that can connect people to the right resources, identify content gaps, and support future innovations such as localized responses, improved user experiences, and more specialized AI services.

This work reflects the Extension Foundation's larger AI priorities: helping Extension reduce duplication, improve access to research-based information, strengthen digital service delivery, prepare its workforce for responsible AI adoption, and meet people where they are at. As AI continues to evolve quickly, the Foundation is focused on making sure Extension is not simply reacting to new technology, but shaping how it is used in service of the public good. ■



How can I help you?

Lawn and Garden

What is the best fertilizer to use on my lawn?

Local Extension Office

How do I contact my local extension office?

Crop Management

What are some effective ways to manage my crops?

Pest Management

Can I use *Bacillus thuringiensis* and spinosad together in a non-chemical form?



Type your question...



[Terms of Use](#) [Privacy policy](#) [About](#) v2.7.0



NATIONAL PROGRAM IMPACTS

The NextGen program invests in the future of our global food and agricultural systems by providing scholarships, paid internships, and professional pathways for students at eligible institutions. By bridging the gap between education and employment, this initiative cultivates a highly skilled and inclusive workforce ready to tackle the challenges of modern agriculture and natural resource management.

NEXTGEN TECHNICAL ADVISING SERVICES

IN 2025...

NextGen provided technical and logistical support that helped local projects secure \$262 million in funding for agricultural workforce diversity. The program launched the AgriOpportunities matchmaking tool and managed major national events to connect students with experiential learning.

- **National Convening Success:** Successfully organized and executed the 3rd Annual In-Person Project Directors Meeting in Kansas City, which drew 100 participants from across all NextGen projects to share best practices and resources.
- **Model USDA Student Event:** Initiated comprehensive logistical planning—including securing lodging, catering, and a custom registration tool—for the Model USDA event scheduled for early 2026 in Tempe, AZ.
- **Technical Assistance and Reporting:** Maintained high-quality support through monthly project director catch-up meetings and ensured the timely submission of the annual REEport to NIFA.
- **Student Career Development:** Provided ongoing virtual support for students, including a strategic pivot toward identifying non-USDA internship opportunities to broaden professional horizons.

The program's technical advising significantly reduced applicant anxiety, allowing institutions to focus on programmatic quality. By providing comprehensive logistical management for national events, NextGen fostered a collaborative environment for project directors to share best practices. The development of custom digital tools continues to streamline the placement of students into the agricultural sector.

NextGen is supported by USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Federal Award Identification Number 2022-70441-38666.

The Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) is a collaborative network of Cooperative Extension educators across the United States and territories who work to improve the delivery of education and information, and the availability of resources related to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.



IN 2025...

Through the FADI-EDEN project, EXF provides the “digital backbone” for the nation’s premier disaster education network, ensuring communities are prepared for, can respond to, and recover from crises.

- **Programmatic Growth:** Achieved a 383% increase in grant proposals from Year 1 to Year 3, ultimately awarding over \$120,000 in 2025 to support local resilience projects. Provided increased support to Year 2 grantees; realized 100% of grantees completed their projects and spent down funds on time.
- **Delegate Engagement:** Increased across all facets of the network, including 450% increase in participation in webinars, an increase in committee participation leading to project milestone achievement; record-breaking attendance to 2025 annual conference
- **Organizational Development:** Worked closely with three task forces comprised of EDEN leaders resulting in three initiatives: 1. High-touch communications with directors nationwide, to increase the visibility of EDEN; 2. The creation of a delegate onboarding toolkit, to enhance new delegate experience and increase engagement; 3. Audit and subsequent updates and improvements to the Resource Dashboard to ensure a faster, more reliable user experience.
- **Inclusive Engagement:** Formalized a pathway for 1994 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) to engage with the network and established a dedicated 1890 EDEN Advisory Group.

The program also initiated a pilot for a new **Delegate Dashboard** to improve profile management and network communication. These infrastructure improvements, combined with a 100% project completion rate among grantees, have significantly strengthened the network’s capacity to deliver disaster education to communities through the United States and the territories.

FADI-EDEN is supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Federal Award Identification Number 2023-37623-40794.

The Pesticide Safety Education Program Funds Management program ensures that essential safety training reaches thousands of professionals who handle restricted use pesticides products in our farms, businesses, and communities. By providing critical funding to experts at land-grant universities, this initiative protects public health and the environment by ensuring applicators are rigorously trained in the most effective and responsible safety practices.



IN 2025...

The PSEFMP continued its critical role in managing and distributing essential funding to Pesticide Safety Education Programs (PSEPs) nationwide.

- **Expanded Impact:** Successfully managed a total of 48 awards during the 2025 grant cycle.
- **Strategic Evolution:** Launched a new competitive RFA process for the 2026 grant year on Nov 03, 2025, offering 20 awards at \$15,000 each to maximize program merit and systemic impact.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** Established an Ad Hoc Committee with the American Association of Pesticide Safety Educators (AAPSE) to refine rubric and evaluation criteria for future funding cycles.

Proactive management protected the continuity of critical safety training during the reduction in funding experienced this year. Additionally, the new competitive model has refined the program's ability to identify and support the most impactful local safety initiatives.

The Pesticide Safety Education Funds Management Program is funded by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Assistance Agreement Number 84066001.

The Extension Collaboration on Immunization Teaching and Engagement (EXCITE) is a nationwide initiative led by U.S. Cooperative Extension to provide adult immunization education. EXCITE's goals are to help rural and other target audiences make informed decisions around vaccinations, strengthen connections between communities and healthcare systems, and support local community partners in implementing programs that increase health outcomes.



IN 2025...

The EXCITE program deployed 23 dedicated health agents to integrate immunization education into high-trust Extension programs. Funded through a CDC-USDA NIFA agreement, the initiative reached over 52 million Americans and provided rapid response resources for H5N1 and measles outbreaks via 190,000 outreach activities and 958 local partnerships.

- **Workforce Expansion:** Successfully scaled up operations by hiring and training new regional health agents, celebrated during a two-day professional development launch in Atlanta.
- **Strategic Deployment:** Leveraged federal seed investment to secure an additional \$1.6 million in local awards.
- **Targeted Education:** Developed four new online courses on immunization and transferred ten integration curricula to a modernized web platform for nationwide access.

Other significant outcomes in 2025 included the successful close-out of the "Bridge" funding phase, which resulted in the creation of tailored educational materials specifically for 1890 and 1994 Land-grant institutions. The Bridge funding also enabled the piloting of the incorporation of vaccine education into the EFNEP curriculum. The program's scholarly impact was solidified with the publication of findings in the Journal of Public Health. Furthermore, the October 2025 Scale Up/Launch training event in Atlanta provided essential professional development for the new cohort of regional health agents.

EXCITE is supported through an Interagency Agreement (IAA) with the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Federal Award Identification Numbers 2021-77041-3483, 2024-48802-43830.

The New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) program serves as an innovation incubator that accelerates high-impact projects to modernize how local communities receive expert assistance. By providing coaching and cutting-edge tools like artificial intelligence, this initiative transforms localized successes into national models that enhance the reach and efficiency of the entire Cooperative Extension System.



IN 2025...

The New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) program achieved transformative growth during the year, leveraging a partnership between the Extension Foundation (EXF) and the University of New Hampshire (UNH) to accelerate technology adoption and build leadership capacity across the Cooperative Extension System (CES).

- Advanced **ExtensionBot**, a chatbot trained on Extension data, which reached over 1.3 million visits and engaged 2,400 experts.
- Hosted 99 websites for national groups and maintained a high-performing Help Desk with an 88% satisfaction rating.
- Launched "Roots to Results," an introductory course for the CES, which reached nearly 1,500 participants by late 2025.
- Maintained national engagement platforms, including **Connect Extension** with 5.2M unique users and **Ask Extension** which processed over 20,000 questions submitted.

The program fostered innovation across the system through targeted investments, including the development of scalable digital engagement models at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Extension. UNH utilized NTAE funding to create ArcGIS-based interactive impact dashboards for key programs like 4-H, Nutrition Connections, and Natural Resources to visualize program reach and participant trends.

It also supported professional development by delivering over 57 customized coaching sessions to Land-grant Universities (LGUs) and training 25 new facilitators in Atlanta for the Impact Collaborative Workbook. These efforts highlight NTAE's role as an incubator for 'Proactive Excellence,' synthesizing AI innovation with human-centered leadership to maintain the Cooperative Extension System as a premier source for research-based solutions.

During 2025, the New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) program provided critical management infrastructure, funding, and strategic support to ECOP-managed Program Action Teams (PATs) to address high-priority societal issues. Through specialized Catalyst and Key Informant services, NTAE helped these teams host national convenings, develop strategic action plans, and accelerate scalable projects across the Cooperative Extension System.

IN 2025...

- Completed two in-person PAT convenings in FY25, which successfully doubled the number of active working groups across the PATs.
- Distributed \$120,000 in funding through an FY26 Request for Applications (RFA), awarding \$20,000 each to six selected PAT working group projects.
- Supported the elevation of the Health & Well-Being PAT to a permanent national program, with NTAE actively funding the Program Manager position through September 2026.
- Formed a new Artificial Intelligence (AI) PAT and secured approval for up to \$60,000 per year in discretionary funding from the ECOP Executive Committee to support new PAT formation and projects until 2027.

To further support these national initiatives, NTAE leveraged its trained Impact Collaborative facilitators to help plan and lead strategic convenings for the PATs, both virtually and in person. This collaborative infrastructure allowed the Sustainable Urban Food Systems PAT to successfully gather 37 national experts in Huntsville, AL, to create strategic action plans targeting urban agriculture and food waste. Similarly, the Resilient Lands and Communities PAT hosted a series of virtual convenings—drawing over 150 registrants for its first session—and successfully developed a whitepaper on resilience along with a Custom GPT tool to help Extension professionals communicate their impact on weather-related resilience. NTAE also supported the National Digital Extension Education Team in planning a Denver convening focused on broadband access and digital skills.

NTAE actively integrates cutting-edge technology into PAT operations by providing access to the Extension Foundation's digital infrastructure, including ExtensionBot, the MERLIN data platform, and the Connect Extension social network. These digital tools enable the PATs to centralize data, host discussion forums, and build national learning networks. This ensures that emerging, coordinated solutions across all priority areas—ranging from workforce development to health and well-being—can effectively scale to meet community needs nationwide.

AgriProspects aims to foster regional cooperation, identify workforce ecosystem gaps, and offer collaborative, adaptive solutions to local and regional employment challenges. The project focuses on increasing awareness of and expanding access to Extension resources which enhance skill levels, facilitate credential attainment, and prepare participants for upskilling and successful entry or re-entry into the workforce.



IN 2025...

AgriProspects matured into a vital clearinghouse and incubator for the agricultural workforce, connecting regional efforts into a unified national strategy.

- **Granting Innovation:** Received 74 proposals requesting over \$14.4 million for the Round 2 Grant cycle, focusing on AI integration and credentialing. Of the 74 proposals, the five most competitive projects were funded and began work.
- **Educational Resources:** Initiated the "Credentialing 101" website to serve as a foundational resource for Extension professionals navigating the evolving landscape of non-degree credentials, with emphasis on including micro-credentials and digital badges.
- **National Convening:** Hosted the 2025 AgriProspects Summit virtually, drawing 127 participants to synchronize regional workforce development strategies.
- **Expanding Reach:** Expanded our university and community reach in the Western Region and with 1994 Tribal Colleges and Universities with the addition of two new coordinators. Adjusted operations to ensure increased engagement with Tribal Colleges and Universities.

The program made significant progress on the **AgriProspects Marketplace**, an interactive clearinghouse for workforce programs that completed beta testing in late 2025. This digital platform is designed to bridge the gap between employers and credential-seeking individuals. Additionally, the program's efforts to standardize workforce development were recognized through the acceptance of a foundational article in the Journal of Extension.

To address urgent agricultural workforce needs across the nation, the AgriProspects Workforce Development Network (funded by a USDA NIFA AFRI grant) awarded \$1 million in funding for its Round 2 grant cycle. The five selected projects focus on establishing digital credentialing infrastructures, deploying practical artificial intelligence (AI) education, or combining both to enhance adult workforce capacity.

AGRIPROSPECTS FUNDED PROJECTS

FIELD-AI: Farm & Industry Extension Learning via Digital AI-Credentials

University of Florida — Dr. Christian Christensen

Grounded in a statewide needs assessment, this project establishes a micro-credentialing program to deliver practical, research-based AI training to Florida’s agricultural producers and farmworkers. Over a two-year timeline, the project will move from assessment to building, piloting, and refining courses before launching them statewide, providing hands-on micro-credentials that make AI tools highly accessible on the farm.

Establishing a Micro-Credentialing Infrastructure for Extension

Penn State — Maria Gorgo-Simcox

This project expands Penn State’s Round 1 “Success Skills in Spanish for Agriculture (SSS4A)” initiative by designing micro-credentialed, industry-informed training for agricultural workers. It will develop specialized learning modules for five core sectors—tree fruit, poultry, dairy, mushroom, and landscaping—while adding advanced language and supervisory courses. These digital credentials align with employer expectations to improve safety, retention, and workforce efficiency.

Logging Smarter: AI-Enhanced Hardwood Bucking Training for Adult Workforce Development

Virginia Tech — Dr. Pipiet Larasatie

This project addresses a historical training gap in log bucking by integrating computer vision, image generation, and AI into the SHARP Logger Program. It develops an interactive, real-time decision-making simulator that models field conditions and value recovery outcomes. Centered in Virginia’s hardwood regions, the project will deliver scalable, open-source digital tools to modernize forestry training nationwide.

Developing Skilled Workforce Training in Fruit & Vegetable Drying and Freezing

Oregon State University — Dr. Qingyang Wang

Targeting farmers, processors, educators, and regulators, this initiative creates a hybrid three-day credentialed short course delivered in both Oregon and New York. The curriculum covers food safety, quality management, drying/freezing sciences, hands-on lab work, and AI applications. Graduates receive stackable digital credentials that build technical readiness for value-added food processing.

Training Ag Extension and Farmer Users for AI and IoT

Tennessee State University — Dr. Suping Zhou

To help small and mid-sized farms leverage data-driven technologies, this project integrates affordable AI and Internet of Things (IoT) analytics into Extension and farmer training. Operating through train-the-trainer models and local farm partnerships, it builds digital competencies in crop monitoring and supply-chain verification to foster food safety, traceability, and market resilience.

AgriProspects is supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Federal Award Identification Number 2023-67037-40533.



BUILDING CAPACITY, DEVELOPING PROFESSIONALS

In 2025, the Extension Foundation continued its robust commitment to equipping Cooperative Extension professionals with the **SKILLS, TOOLS, AND LEADERSHIP CAPACITY** needed to strengthen local program delivery. Throughout the year, professional and leadership development initiatives reached 2,374 unique individuals and generated 10,231 total registrations across 279 events. By combining human-centered leadership training with innovative skill-building, the Foundation serves as an essential engine for developing the Extension workforce.

THE IMPACT COLLABORATIVE AND NEW FACILITATOR TRAINING



A cornerstone of the Foundation's capacity-building efforts is the Impact Collaborative, which provides a comprehensive skills curriculum to help Extension professionals rethink program development and innovation. In 2025, the Foundation redesigned and publicly released the Impact Collaborative Workbook as a dynamic, interactive digital tool to better facilitate team collaboration from diverse locations.

To support the rollout of this new tool, the Extension Foundation hosted an intensive Impact Collaborative Facilitator Training in Atlanta in February. The event successfully trained 25 new facilitators from across the Cooperative Extension System. Participants engaged in hands-on learning designed to build their facilitation, coaching, and project management skills. Following the training, these newly certified facilitators were immediately deployed to lead high-impact national and regional events, such as the North Central Farm Stress Summit in Minneapolis and various strategic planning convenings for the ECOP Program Action Teams (PATs).

LAUNCH OF THE EXL | EXTENSION LAB

To further expand its leadership and organizational development offerings, the Extension Foundation officially launched the Extension Lab (EXL) in late 2025. As a new mission-aligned “sold service,” EXL operates as a service that connects Land-grant universities with a national network of vetted partners and contractors.

EXL offers specialized support spanning executive coaching, organizational Board of Directors strategy, interactive workshops, and faculty leadership development. By the end of the year, EXL had already established partnerships with prominent training organizations—including SPARC, Diary Detox, and Crucial Learning—and received over 25 requests for support from county teams and university Extension programs nationwide. Demonstrating immediate momentum, EXL successfully secured Michigan State University FCS as its first official client.



SYSTEM-WIDE LEADERSHIP COACHING AND ONBOARDING

Beyond these major initiatives, the Foundation delivered highly customized, just-in-time leadership support. Throughout the year, the Foundation’s Leadership & Team Development Specialist conducted 57 customized executive coaching sessions for faculty and staff across 14 different Land-grant institutions. Additionally, to support the broader onboarding and baseline knowledge of the Extension workforce, the self-paced “Roots to Results” (CES 101) online course saw immense success, enrolling nearly 1,500 participants by late 2025.

Through its Program Center Stage and Extension Skills webinar series, Extension Foundation helps professionals acquire new skills and noteworthy applications in Extension programming. Program Center

Stage spotlights local projects and work funded by the New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) program, giving a national platform to diverse initiatives such as food preservation programming in California, building a new Master Naturalist program in Alabama, and establishing collaborative urban science networks. Meanwhile, the Extension Skills series, which has been offered up to twice a month, focuses on equipping professionals with practical knowledge and tools. One set of workshops focused on fundraising, grant & partnership development. Both series consistently draw strong attendance and further expand the reach and capacity of the Extension workforce.

EXTENSION SKILLS TOPICS IN 2025

Communication, Messaging, and Storytelling

- Fundamentals of Good Communication
- Creating Communication Content
- Creating Effective Impact Statements
- Creating a 1-minute Project Pitch
- Talk to the Media: How to Tell your Story
- Presentation Tips and Ways to Reduce Cognitive Load

Science Communication & Navigating Challenging Conversations

- Communicating Science and Research to Policymakers
- Using Science Communication Skills to Navigate Controversy and Build Relationships

Program Planning and Evaluation

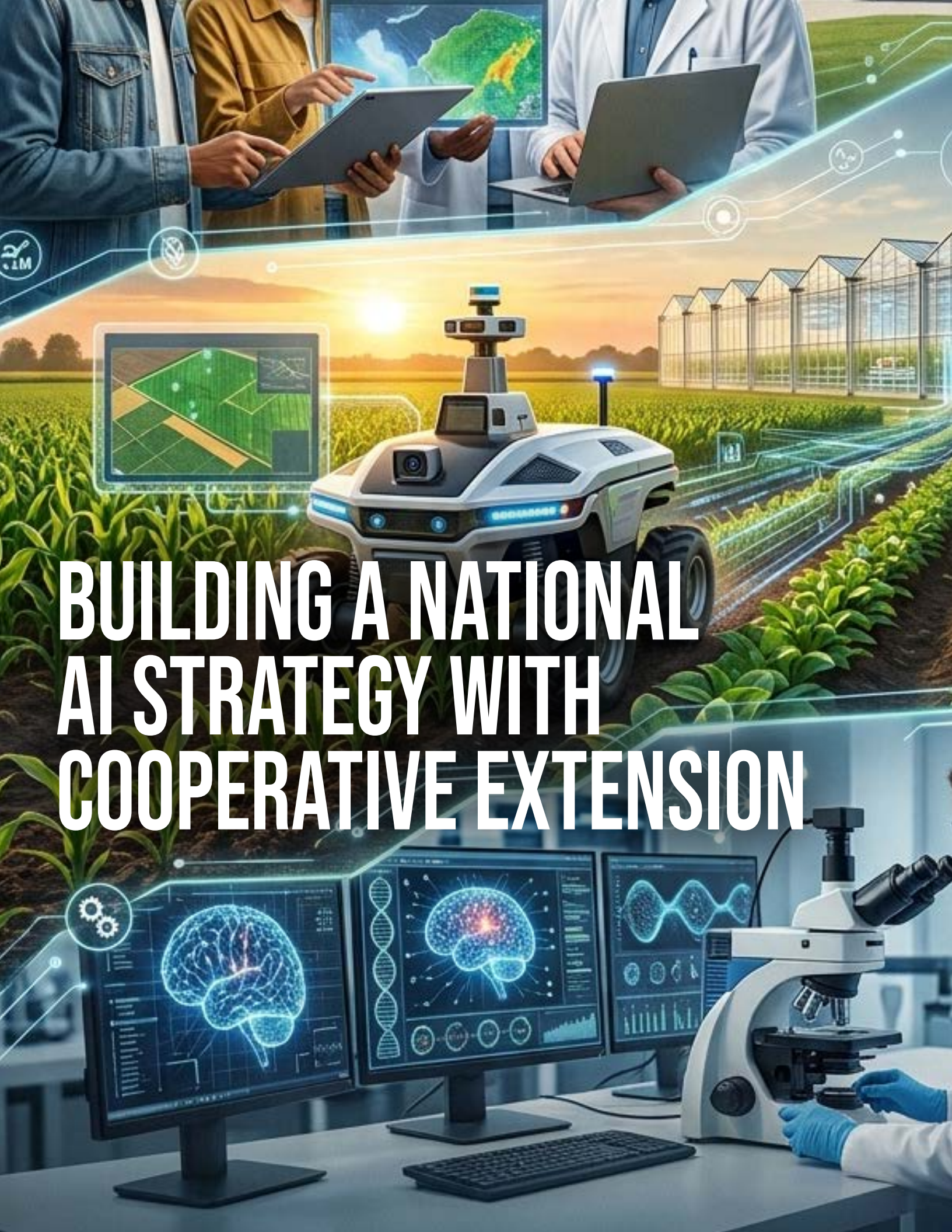
- Keeping Extension Programs Relevant
- Needs Assessments for New Educators
- Introduction to Culturally Responsive Evaluation Practices
- Using Publicly Available Data to Support Evaluation and Program Planning
- Programming Planning for Impact and Evaluation

Digital Engagement, Technology, and Data

- Spatial Data Literacy: Reading Maps for Effective Decisions
- Spatial Approaches for Doing Needs Assessment and Evaluating Program Outcomes
- Introduction to Creating an Online Course
- Extensions Role in Navigating AI Landscape
- Introduction (and More) to Private Databases for Digitizing Records

Outreach, Partnerships, and Engagement

- Building a Volunteer Digital Advocacy Program
- Creating an Event Marketing Checklist
- Forging Connections, Increasing Partnerships, and Producing Results



BUILDING A NATIONAL AI STRATEGY WITH COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

One critical part of the Extension Foundation's 2025 work was helping Cooperative Extension move from broad conversations about artificial intelligence to a clearer understanding of what AI means for the system, the workforce, and the communities Extension serves.

That work was reflected in the release of the 2025 National AI Report, which established a systemwide baseline for how Extension and agInnovation Directors and Administrators were thinking about artificial intelligence. The report identified major themes around readiness, infrastructure, governance, workforce development, and the need for Cooperative Extension to remain a trusted source of information in an AI-driven world.

The Foundation then built on that work with the 2026 National AI Report, which expanded the original report by gathering insights directly from the Extension workforce and comparing those perspectives with the views of Directors and Administrators. That comparison added an important layer of understanding. It showed where leadership and workforce perspectives aligned, where gaps existed, and what kinds of support Extension professionals need as AI becomes part of their daily work.

At the same time, the Foundation continued to advance ExtensionBot, an AI-powered information tool designed specifically for Cooperative Extension. Built on Extension knowledge, ExtensionBot has seen significant improvements in content ingestion, retrieval, response quality, and the organization of trusted Extension resources. These improvements are helping make

Extension information easier for the public and professionals to access. ExtensionBot's progress is also being recognized beyond the Foundation. The Extension Foundation is a founding member of the AgriBench Consortium, led by the University of Illinois Center for Digital Agriculture. AgriBench evaluates how AI models perform on agriculture-related questions, creating an important benchmark for accuracy and usefulness in real-world agricultural contexts. Within that work, ExtensionBot is currently ranked as a top-performing chatbot for horticulture questions, outperforming other models, including commercial AI models.

That matters because Cooperative Extension's value depends on trust. As more people turn to AI tools for answers about gardening, farming, food systems, disaster preparedness, and community issues, Extension needs to be present in those spaces

with information that is accurate, practical, and grounded in research. ExtensionBot is one way the Foundation is helping ensure that Extension knowledge remains visible, accessible, and useful in a changing information environment.

What stands out about this work is how connected it all is. The National AI Reports helped define the opportunities, concerns, and readiness gaps across the system. ExtensionBot shows how the Foundation is responding with practical infrastructure, and helping institutions put their data in formats that are gaining rapid adoption. The AgriBench recognition provides external validation that this work is not just aspirational. It is measurable, useful, and already performing at a high level. ■



HOW CAN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AND THE EXTENSION FOUNDATION HELP YOU?

From health and technology to agriculture, natural resources, and workforce development, Cooperative Extension brings trusted, research-backed solutions directly to communities— turning national priorities into local impact.

Extension Foundation (EXF) is the national nonprofit partner to the U.S. Cooperative Extension System, which operates through the nation's 112 land-grant universities in all 3,000+ counties and parishes across the US and the Territories.

Extension Foundation strengthens Extension's national capacity — helping local Extension programs scale, modernize, and collaborate across states to address our nation's complex challenges in agriculture, health, workforce development, resilience and disaster preparedness, and community well-being.

Why This Matters for Partners

Extension Foundation offers the opportunity to work with a network of 35,000 trusted community-based educators and volunteers without having to negotiate 50 separate state relationships, while still delivering local impact. Extension Foundation does not compete with universities, but serves as a highly trusted, neutral, partner to manage funds, partnerships, and compliance on behalf of U.S. Cooperative Extension. It helps scale proven solutions quickly and align federal, philanthropic, and private investments with community-level delivery.

What EXF Does

- Operates at the national level to support and connect state & local Extension programs.
- Serves as a convener across institutions, states, and sectors.
- Manages large, multi-state federal initiatives on behalf of Extension.
- Acts as a bridge between Extension, federal agencies, philanthropy, and industry.
- Leads innovation in technology, workforce development, and program modernization.

How to Work with EXF

Partners collaborate with EXF to co-design and pilot national initiatives, scale proven multi-state models, contribute technology, data, or workforce expertise, and participate in national convenings or advisory roles.

What Partners Can Achieve

Each year, EXF supports the training of thousands of community-based educators and volunteers, and operates national platforms used by Extension organizations nationwide, turning innovation into measurable, system-wide impact. ■



CONNECT EXTENSION

CONNECT is a closed social media network for Cooperative Extension and other Land-grant university professionals, their community partners, and federal partners.

With CONNECT you can disseminate information and resources across the system and promote your Extension events to colleagues in other states and to the public.

CONNECT ►

OUR LIBRARY NEVER CLOSES

Check out the Extension Foundation virtual bookshelf for the latest Extension research and program development across the country.

LIBRARY ►



WWW.EXTENSION.ORG



EXTENSION
FOUNDATION