

2015 Battelle Study:

Analysis of the Value of Family & Consumer Sciences Extension in the North Central Region

Summary

Battelle's review of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Extension in the North Central Region (NCR) reveals a highly dynamic, pragmatic and contemporary applied academic discipline that is making a positive difference in the lives of millions of Americans. FCS Extension addresses some of the most pressing social challenges facing the nation, its communities and families through research-based educational programming. The Cooperative Extension System is unique in its capacity to reach broad swaths of the American public in every state and county with consistent, research-based programming.

Studies listed in the Battelle report point out that limiting the prospects for America's future is related to the diminished health and well-being of its citizens, compared with previous generations. FCS Extension in the NCR is ideally positioned to be an important contributor to Health Extension, the National Framework for Health and Wellness, which the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) unveiled in 2014.

This new programmatic focus will tap into the substantial competencies of FCS Extension regarding nutrition and health issues, and will leverage Extension's established and robust educational delivery capabilities directly or through partnerships.

"The Extension model arose at a time when American agriculture was largely inefficient and only marginally productive. The consequences of the agricultural practices of the time were endangering our nation's economic, environmental, and personal health. A century later, American agriculture is without equal in its contributing food to a growing world population. We, and others, believe that this same system of Extension can do for the nation's health what it did for American agriculture."

Excerpt from "Cooperative Extension's National Framework for Health and Wellness," 2014, on the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Smith-Lever Act, which created the nation's Cooperative Extension System.

Key Findings

Family and Consumer Sciences Extension programming:

- Results in substantial economic returns to the nation.
- Makes a positive difference in behaviors and shaping policy at the local, state and national levels.
- Utilizes the most effective educational materials available.
- Partners with others to leverage resources and reach people as effectively as possible.
- Focuses on education and prevention, which is a key differentiating factor between FCS and social services agencies.
- Utilizes extensive train-the-trainer work to multiply the impact of educational efforts.

Key Opportunities

- FCS Extension in the NCR can strengthen its knowledge-sharing process to reduce parallel efforts and combine efforts in evaluation work to better document program successes.
- Standardizing and strengthening basic reporting and evaluation methods will allow for more effective assessments and greater accountability. Understanding program effectiveness and grasping the extent of FCS Extension's impact and reach are difficult because of lack of consistent evaluation and reporting across programs and states.

Key Challenge

- Insufficient resources are available to conduct comprehensive evaluations for the majority of programs.

Key Findings Explained

FCS results in substantial economic returns to the nation

- Every \$1 spent on Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) results in savings on food expenditures of \$2.48 through smarter shopping behavior, meal planning and enhanced use of low-cost recipes and more home-cooked meals.
- Potential long-term healthcare cost savings associated with EFNEP are in the range of \$3.62 to \$12.50 in savings per \$1 spent as a result of healthier diets and reduced chronic disease. Long-term savings from 2014 participation in EFNEP for the NCR is estimated between \$86 and \$185 million, at a program cost of \$14 million in federal funding (about 63,000 individuals participated in EFNEP across the region).
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) delivered through Extension is much more efficient than through other providers (in 2010, \$36/person vs. \$142/person). Studies indicate 40 to 90% of participants improved nutrition behaviors and 40 to 60% of participants increased physical activity.
- SNAP-Ed is significantly larger than EFNEP reaching 728,000 participants in the region in 2014. Cost savings have not been evaluated, but if its savings reached even half the level of the most conservative figures for EFNEP, it would result in long-term cost savings to the region of \$185 million each year, based on the program cost of \$61 million in 2014.
- The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, developed at Stanford University and used by seven NCR Extension programs, provides an approximate \$4 savings in health-care expenditures for every \$1 spent on the program.
- FCS Extension partners with the National Restaurant Association to provide ServSafe education in ten NCR states, which can reduce foodborne illness and savings in associated health-care costs and losses annually.
- A cost-benefit analysis of Iowa State's "Strengthening Families Program: For Parents and Youth 10-14" identified economic returns of up to \$9.60 for each \$1 spent on the program. Eight states in the NCR have implemented this program.
- Senior Health Insurance Counseling programs in two NCR states provide education to Medicare beneficiaries resulting in \$20.69 in savings on medical and prescription costs for each \$1 spent on the program in 2014.

"Through the cornerstone programs of SNAP-Ed and EFNEP, and other programs in nutrition, it is likely that Family and Consumer Sciences Extension reaches more people with nutrition education than any other source in the nation."

FCS makes a positive difference in behaviors and shaping policy at the local, state and national levels

"The Food, Nutrition & Health efforts of FCS Extension are a major factor contributing to the health and well-being of people across the region, combining the best of university research-based program development with a robust delivery system which is responsive to local needs. The positive changes that they bring about at the individual, family, community, state and national levels are unparalleled."

A total of 107 different FCS programs were reviewed/cited in the Battelle study as yielding behavior change and/or knowledge gained based on program evaluations completed by January 2014. FCS Extension has made a concerted effort to evaluate programs and prove that programs make a difference. Quality outcome/impact data is critical to providing evidence that public spending is making a difference, is a good investment, and also helps shape policy.

Addressing the outer rings of the socio-economic model help create healthful environments and lead toward policies that support healthier families and individuals. Examples include: Voices for Food, Communities Preventing Childhood Obesity, and Together We Can.

FCS utilizes the most effective educational materials available

The previously cited list of 107 programs were a combination of the highest quality, evidence-based programs available today to address identified needs. The program developers ranged from Stanford University to the CDC to state Extension specialists on staff at each of the 12 states in the NCR.

NCR Extension Specialists develop award winning programs that are used across the country. The following are a few of the best: Strengthening Families (multiple awards), Walk Kansas, Recovering After Disaster: The Family Financial Toolkit, Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?, and CoupleTALK.

FCS partners with others to leverage resources and reach people as effectively as possible

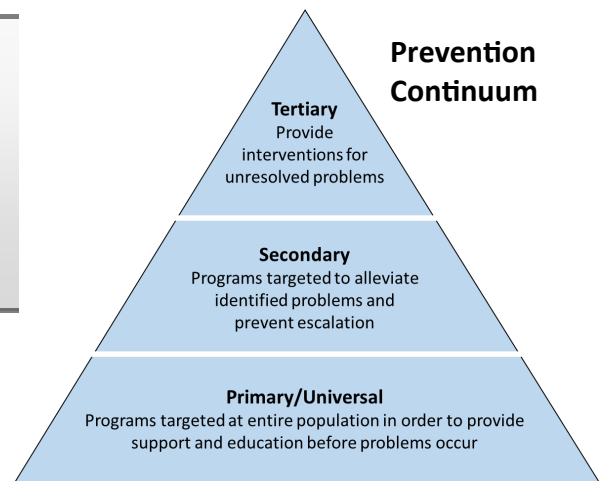
FCS Extension partners with multiple agencies and organizations in each state to leverage funding for staff and operating, and to reach a diverse audience.

Collaboration among the NCR states in FCS is strong and innovative. The most recent grant projects listed below address the community-level/outer ring of the social-ecological model, which has attracted grantors who understand the need to leverage educational efforts beyond the individual or family level. Examples include: North Central Nutrition Education Center of Excellence (all states), Communities Preventing Childhood Obesity (seven states), Voices for Food (six states), and Community Based Participatory Research Obesity Prevention for Middle School Youth (three states).

FCS focuses on education and prevention, which is a key differentiating factor between FCS and social services agencies

“We can gain money by investing early to close disparities and prevent gaps, or we can continue to drive up deficit spending by paying to remediate disparities when they are harder and more expensive to close. The argument is very clear from an economic standpoint.”

James Heckman, Nobel Prize-winning economist from the University of Chicago, quoted in “The Two Year Window,” New Republic Magazine, 2011



The science of prevention and education provides a solid framework for FCS Extension. There is a common misunderstanding among the general public and decision makers that all state agencies are already equipped to address the same educational goals of FCS Extension. State agencies primarily address policy and regulations. When an issue is identified that requires attention to prevent it from reoccurring, the prevention continuum (primary, secondary and tertiary prevention) provides a model for preventing the problem at various levels, regardless of the issue. Whether you want to prevent a problem in agriculture (pesticide safety, soil salinity, livestock diseases) or in FCS (obesity, chronic disease, child abuse), each area of the continuum needs attention, and partners need to collaborate to be successful.

Primary prevention and education programs target the broad population to provide support and education before a problem occurs. This is the main emphasis for Extension education. Secondary prevention targets the identified problem and prevents escalation. This is an area where partnerships between educational entities and service/intervention entities is critical to stop the problems before they escalate to the point of needing high-cost interventions. Tertiary intervention provide methods to address unresolved problems. This is the main emphasis for social services and other policy or regulation agencies. By reducing barriers to learning at each level and targeting all three levels, reductions in identified problems can be achieved. FCS Extension plays a critical role in the primary and secondary levels.

FCS utilizes extensive train-the-trainer work to multiply the impact of educational efforts

FCS Extension equips those it educates with the tools, processes and knowledge required for healthful living. In addition to direct education to individuals and families, education is often provided through a train-the-trainer approach, whereby the research-based solutions are transferred to professionals or volunteers, thereby filling a critical need in providing best practices for positive outcomes. The end result is a ripple effect of best practices used by the broader community.

“FCS Extension programming that targets professionals such as childcare center directors, and other FCS Extension activities affecting infrastructure and policy can change the entire approach of care in a facility, community, or state, and have rippling effects that improve the level of care, and thus the potential for healthy development, for an entire generation of children.”

“Family and Consumer Sciences in the North Central Region is uniquely positioned to be an important contributor to Health Extension, the national Framework for Health and Wellness, which was unveiled in 2014 by the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP).”