

Texas Community Futures Forum: A 4-Year Strategic Plan for Texas Cooperative Extension in El Paso County

What Are the Issues?

EDUCATION

Education was an issue encompassing both formal and non-formal methods. It included traditional K-12 and higher educational opportunities, but also specified the need to continue building upon outreach education that encourages healthy youth development and continuing educational opportunities for adults from all backgrounds.

WATER

Water was identified as an issue critical to our region and as broad as it is controversial. Specific issues related to water included quality, quantity, development of new sources, reuse, and conservation strategies.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community & economic development included issues related to expanding the job base with emphasis on the promotion of higher paying jobs rather than minimum wage jobs. Other issues were related to taxing issues with alternative approaches to the control of taxes through either consolidation of services or expansion of the tax base or a combination of both. Improvement in the economy and quality of life in El Paso was an issue with a number of approaches provided that included both expansion of business and managed growth.

BORDER ISSUES

"Border issues" was a general category designed to capture the numerous issues unique to El Paso based on its proximity to the border. The dynamics of an international community were viewed as unique and worthy of individual attention because it impacts a broad base of issues, including education, health, traffic, crime, trade, environment, immigration, and the shared approaches and costs involved in addressing these issues.

HEALTH CARE

While many health issues are affected by our proximity to the border, there were many issues related to health care that were not. These included access, cost, quality of service, and health services for special audiences such as children, elderly, and the indigent.

How has Extension Responded?

EDUCATION

Extension is an educational agency by design and a member of The Texas A&M University System. The enabling legislation that created Extension established it as an institution that extended the knowledge resources of land grant institutions to the local level through non-formal educational methods. As such, Extension is in a position to support formal education with research-based information and curriculum and provide direct non-formal educational programs, continuing education, training, and technical assistance to the community in a variety of subject matter areas. Examples of these educational programs are outlined below.

To support expansion of Distance Education opportunities for El Paso, Extension established video-conferencing facilities capable of delivering university level graduate courses and continuing education courses from Texas A&M University and Texas Tech University to El Paso County residents.

The Master Gardener Program provides 14 weeks of intensive training in the areas of ornamental horticulture, vegetable production, agronomy, entomology, plant pathology, and other disciplines to a corps of 25- 35 volunteers.

Agents and Master Gardeners provide Continuing Education Programs in Home Horticulture through UTEP's Center for Lifetime Learning and EPCC's Continuing Ed. Dept.

The South Texas AmeriCorps Initiative provides on-the-job training and higher education credit to program participants in El Paso, some of which return to work for Extension.

A series of Landscape Schools for Homeowners were provided in cooperation with El Paso Water Utilities' Turf Rebate Program to provide homeowners with the knowledge to design their own home landscape.

Plant Clinics are provided at the Ft. Bliss PX (Post Exchange) for military and civilian personnel on base.

Community Presentations in Horticulture are provided to civic groups, garden clubs, schools, non-profit groups, and others on a request basis to support their club's community programs.

The Junior Master Gardener Program provides youth education in natural resource issues and was implemented at Pebble Hills Elementary for their after school academy.

Weekly Gardening Articles in the El Paso Times provide the community with information to improve their quality of life.

"HOMEGROWN" is an educational segment on NBC's KTSM Channel 9 television station that provides helpful information to homeowners and improves their quality of life.

Kids & Kows & More Expo reaches 30,000 children annually with science-based education related to food and fiber, including water issues affecting El Paso.

The school-based Cylinder Gardening Program provides a science-based curriculum for children that supports and enhances public education.

A Youth Leadership Team of 4H members receives training and opportunities for experiential learning as they plan and implement events and activities to support the El Paso 4H program.

Extension provides structure and support for a 4H Teen Council that helps plan and guide the El Paso County 4H youth program.

Extension provides structure and support for a 4H Adult Leader Association that helps plan and guide volunteer and parental support of the El Paso County 4H youth program.

Through Paso Del Norte Health Foundation's Youth in Action Initiative, Extension supports a lower valley youth leadership group and is integrating it into the county 4H Program.

The 4H Good News Program brings the benefits of the traditional 4H program into urban areas with the support of a county 4H program assistant.

Through Kellogg and USDA funding, limited resource youth at Lindbergh and La Union Elementary Schools are learning more about careers in agriculture and the importance of a higher education through the Agricultural Literacy Project.

Strengthening Our Capacity to Care (SOCC), a joint project with juvenile probation, provides youth opportunities for juvenile offenders.

Club Management Training is provided for all volunteers who provide organizational support for 4H Clubs operating in El Paso County.

Texans Building Character, Extension's character education program, provides school-based programs and activities that support the district's goals in student character development.

4H Roundup provides opportunities for youth in El Paso County to development public speaking and decision-making skills through county and district-based contests.

4H Master Volunteers are provided with in-depth training in a specific area, enabling them to better support and assist youth with projects of interest.

Tri-County Camp is a annual three-day event for youth in Hudspeth, El Paso, and Doña Ana Counties that provides leadership training through recreational activities hosted at the Scott Able Camp.

The Egg to Chick Program is a science-based school curriculum that provides support for public schools through an interactive demonstration project.

The Mobile Dairy Classroom, sponsored by the Southwest Dairy Farmers, is a live demonstration of the milking process and the dietary value of milk.

Nutrition, Food Safety, and Food Resource Management is taught to El Paso County food stamp recipients through Better Living for Texans, a program funded by the Texas Department of Human Services.

The Texas Master Naturalist Program was initiated in El Paso County and is training a corps of volunteers in environmental sciences and natural resource management.

Extension educational programs support Irrigation Licensing and Continuing Education Units for Irrigation companies operating in El Paso County.

Turfgrass Management Programs are provided to the public, city & county parks departments, and school grounds maintenance departments to support training and education for employees.

Sports Athletic Field Education (SAFE) provides educational and technical support to schools and parks departments who are responsible for the maintenance of sports and athletic fields.

Cotton & Pecan Agronomy education programs are provided for agricultural producers in the upper and lower El Paso Valley.

Waste management courses in composting and recycling are provided to schools and the public to support their capacity to implement best management practices at the homeowner level.

Water conservation education programs are provided to schools and the public to support their capacity to implement best management practices at the homeowner level.

Soil conservation education programs are provided to schools and the public to support their capacity to implement best management practices at the homeowner level

The Pesticide Education Program, sponsored by El Paso Water Utilities, targeted homeowner users of pesticides with information about the safe use, storage, and disposal of pesticides and their containers.

Pesticide Applicator programs provide private, commercial, and non-commercial applicators with the

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necessary training and testing to obtain and maintain licenses allowing them to purchase and apply pesticides.

A Cotton Scout School and a Workshop Under the Trees were sponsored by Extension to provide educational support for effective pest management strategies in agricultural production areas.

WATER

Extension has the capacity to support water issues through training and education, applied research and demonstrations, and technical assistance based on credible, reliable, and proven research. In cooperation with the research arm of the nationwide land grant system, Extension can also link research and researchers to local problems and work cooperatively with local partners to solve these problems. Below are examples of such efforts.

The Pesticide Education Program (PEP) has resulted in consistent negative test results, assuring effluent that meets government water quality standards for the City of El Paso.

Landscape Irrigation Audit programs have developed a corps of certified irrigation auditors in El Paso County that have the skills to effectively measure the efficiency of irrigation systems in homes, businesses, parks, and golf courses.

The Sports Athletic Field Education (SAFE) Program has been shown to save over 1 acre-foot of water, some 380,000 gallons, on a football field over the course of a season and has helped reduce player injuries by 40%.

The Texas Master Naturalist program has provided a corps of volunteers who are supporting the development of the Rio Bosque project and other community efforts to enhance natural resource treasures.

The Texas Master Gardener program established and maintains a community native plant demonstration garden at the Texas A&M Research & Extension Center and supports community programs promoting Xeriscaping in this desert environment.

The Rio Grande Basin Water Initiative has provided financial support to existing and new programs that support water conservation in urban areas and in agricultural production areas.

The Windbreak Tree program introduces thousands of water-smart trees annually that require very little water, beautify the community, and reduce the negative impact of high winds.

Irrigation Courses have enhanced the skills of irrigation installers and the efficiency of irrigation systems installed in El Paso area landscapes.

The On-Site Wastewater Treatment Center has provided a community resource for training and continuing education that helps septic tank installers assure safe on-site wastewater treatment systems in areas of the county that are not served by the city's wastewater system.

Community Presentations on water quality and conservation to schools, civic groups, and community organizations have helped raise awareness of water issues in the county.

Water Career Exploration exhibits through fairs and class presentations raised awareness of careers in the area of water.

An Aqua Food youth program demonstrated how food is grown using the medium of water.

Kids & Kows & More Expo provided for a Water Exhibit that showed the hydrologic cycle and the methods in which water can be polluted by runoff.

Community Tree Plantings were conducted through grant funds, helping provide water-smart landscaping for selected schools.

The Tri-County 4H Camp focused on water issues and methods to conserve and protect water quality.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community development, and economic development as a significant component, is a broad issue for which Extension has limited capacity to support formally and directly. Much of Extension's support for community and economic development comes from the benefits that its educational programs provide and the corresponding improvement in the quality of life that results.

Extension, in cooperation with Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension, established a New Position in El Paso for Community & Economic Development.

Extension brings the resources of The Texas A&M University System to the El Paso area, bringing in federal, state, grant, and in-kind support exceeding \$1.5 million and helping to support a \$100 million agricultural industry and community needs in diet & nutrition, family development, youth development, and health.

Small Farmer Outreach Program has helped small growers avoid foreclosure, secure loans, reorganize debt, and in some cases, expand operations. It has also led to a \$138,000 grant program to expand efforts in this area.

The Cotton Pima S6 Seed Production project and Cotton Variety Trials seek to protect the profitability of a \$25 million cotton industry.

Pink Bollworm/Boll Weevil Eradication Projects save cotton producers hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage that could otherwise be caused by these pests.

Applied research and demonstration projects for Pecan Nut Casebearer Management protect a Pecan industry that generates more than \$12 million in sales alone.

The Youth in Action initiative has helped expand youth development efforts in the Lower Valley.

4H Good News program efforts are helping bring 4H opportunities to inner city youth. Kids & Kows & More provides a unique educational experience for youth.

BORDER ISSUES

Border issues are diverse and complex. Extension is in the best position to help with issues for which it has subject matter expertise and technical knowledge. Cooperative bi-national approaches to border issues require the cultivation of relationships on both sides of the border. Extension has the capacity to respond to this issue by developing programs that engage our neighbors in the State of Chihuahua and increase understanding and appreciation of each other.

Extension has initiated cooperative discussions with Juárez-based INIFAP's research station in the State of Chihuahua to explore possible cooperative ventures in applied research and community education that benefits both the El Paso and Juárez communities.

Extension provides support to the Sanidad Vegetal for binational efforts to effectively management pests on agricultural crops.

The Kellogg 2020 Vision Project provided collaborative support for youth development efforts in El Paso, Las Cruces, and Juárez.

The annual Mission Possible Conference addresses a variety of environmental issues and involves binational participation.

Extension supports the Tri-State, Tri-City Water Fest which provides a regional focus on water, involving the three major regional cities of Las Cruces, El Paso, and Juárez.

Extension support the Border Cities Recycles Day, sponsoring the event jointly with the City and County of El Paso and targeting youth and the community.

Extension supports and participates in projects sponsored by the Solid Waste Regional Advisory Committee of the Rio Grande Council of Governments.

Extension supports and participates in the Far West Texas Water Planning Group sponsored by the Texas Water Development Board.

Extension is a co-sponsor of the Sun Country Tree Conference cooperatively with the West Texas Urban Forestry Council.

Extension supports and participates in the Environmental Summits cooperatively with the office of Senator Shapleigh and County Attorney Jose Rodriguez.

HEALTH CARE

As an organization charged with non-formal education, Extension's capacity to address health care is largely focused on prevention education that seeks to improve health by improving knowledge, skills, and behaviors positively. Extension does not provide direct health care, but can also impact the quality, access, and affordability of health care by linking with these providers and providing support services that can have an impact on these issues.

The Expanded Nutrition Program targets 32,000 limited resource families with a nutrition education curriculum that includes an 8 lesson series and improves family diets, while stretching food dollars.

The Expanded Nutrition Program provides for a six lesson series that targets youth with educational programs to improve diet and health.

The Expanded Nutrition Program supports a Teen Parents Conference (TAPS) that teaches teen parents about proper infant and child nutrition.

Summer Youth Nutrition Camps are sponsored by nutrition program assistants to promote healthy diets and lifestyles among youth.

Extension is a participant in the Paso Del Norte Health Foundation's Que Sabrosa Vida nutrition program.

Extension sponsors and promotes a public promotional campaign on Nutrition during March, a month designated for nutrition awareness.

Extension promotes and supports healthy lifestyles, good diets and nutrition, and disease prevention through Health Fairs in schools, local conferences, and other public venues.

Extension promotes health through a comprehensive 4H Food & Nutrition Program for 4H youth.

The Better Living for Texans programs promotes health through programs in food safety, wellness, and food resource management.

The Mission Possible Environmental Conference promotes community health through changes in behaviors

and practices that promotes a healthy environment.

The Pesticide Education Program (PEP) has helped reduce the presence of pesticide residue in the city's wastewater effluent.

Our Partners

Partnerships are a critical component for Extension to assure that efforts to address local issues are coordinated, efficient, and effective. Further, they allow for pooling of human and fiscal resources, build on the strengths of all involved parties, and expand the scope of educational programs and services provided to the community. Without partners, Extension programs would be limited to the capacity of our faculty and staff.

Adult Probation Department
Bank of America
City of El Paso - Solid Waste Dept.
City of El Paso - Parks & Recreation
Communities in Schools (CIS)
Delta & Pine Land Corporation
El Paso Master Gardener Association
El Paso ISD
El Paso Water Utilities
El Paso Times
El Paso Water Imp. Dist #1
El Paso Academy East
El Paso Housing Authority
El Paso County Coliseum
El Paso County Commissioners Court
El Paso County Parks Department
El Paso Pest Management Association
El Paso Area Cotton Growers
El Paso Pecan Growers Association
EPCC Continuing Education Department
Juvenile Probation Department
Keep El Paso Beautiful
Kellogg Foundation
KTSM - NBC
Mission Possible Coalition
National 4H Council
New Mexico State University
New Mexico Department of Agriculture Structural
Pest Control Board of Texas
Paso Del Norte Health Foundation
Pasodale Elementary
Region 19 Education Service Center
Rio Grande Council of Governments
Senator Shapleigh
South Texas AmeriCorps Initiative
Southwest Dairy Farmers
Southwest Irrigation Association

Su Pima Cotton Association
Surratt Elementary
TAMU Colonias Program
Texas Forest Service
Texas Department of Agriculture
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
Texas Commission on Volunteerism & Community Service
Texas Pest Management Association
Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation
Texas Department of Human Services
Texas A&M Research & Extension Center
Texas Master Naturalist Association - Trans Pecos Chapter
TNRCC
United States Department of Agriculture
University of Texas at El Paso
UTEP Center for Lifetime Learning
Western Pecan Growers Association
Ysleta ISD

Resources That Support Extension Programs

Extension programs receive significant funding or in-kind resources from the following sources. Many of these groups are also active partners in developing and implementing programs that are of mutual interest.

These resources make our programs possible or enhance their effectiveness. The County of El Paso is the principle local partner for Extension, providing the largest amount of local support and the necessary infrastructure and seed money for Extension to develop and implement programs.

Arizona Cotton Improvement Association
Cotton Grower Assessments
County of El Paso
Course Fees
Delta & Pine Land Corporation
Edgar Park Elementary
El Paso Water Utilities
Ft. Bliss PX
Horticulture Program Development Cte.
Kellogg Foundation
Lowe's
Master Gardener Association
National 4H Council
Paso Del Norte Health Foundation
Pebble Hills Elementary
Rio Grande Basin Initiative
Rio Grande Council of Governments
South Texas AmeriCorps Initiative
Southwest Dairy Farmers
Su Pima Cotton Association
Texas Commission on Volunteerism & Community Service
Texas Pest Management Association
Texas Department of Human Services
Texas Department of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
University of Texas at El Paso

Supporting Community Capacity

Extension provides support for larger community-based projects and organizations in an effort to avoid duplication of effort and synergize with others on large community-wide projects designed to improve the quality of life for El Pasoans. Below are examples of projects, committees, boards, and organizations which Extension faculty support with their time, effort, and resources. Through these efforts, Extension provides support for the community's capacity to develop and implement projects and programs that few could accomplish individually.

Border Cities Recycles Committee
Dia del Rio
Earth Day
Environmental Summit
EvenStart Steering Cte, Aliviane, Head Start Child Crisis
Far West Water Planning Group
Informal Science Association
Keep El Paso Beautiful
Keystone Heritage Park
Mass Media Resource
Mission Possible Coalition
Mission Valley Steering Committee
Municipal Commercial Landscape Review Committee
Pink Bollworm Task Force (NCC)
Pink Bollworm Advisory Board (TDA)
Riverpark Task Force

Solid Waste Advisory Board-RGCOG
TDA Urban Ag. Grant Review Cte
TXDOT Aesthetic Review Team
West Texas Urban Forestry Council
Ysleta FFA Task Force