

LARIMER COUNTY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

2021 - 2026



LARIMER COUNTY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION





Letter from Our Director Kerri Rollins

The Larimer County CSU Extension Office has been offering valuable community programs for a long time including education & service in:

- Gardening, trees, & lawns
- Food preservation, nutrition, & commercial food safety
- 4-H projects & clubs
- Small acreage management & native plant identification
- Civic engagement
- Farmers' Market
- Resources for aging adults, grandparents, & families.



We will continue to build & strengthen current program areas in which we excel & are valued in our community. So why is this Strategic Guidance plan so important? This plan identifies additional areas where Extension's educational efforts can be the most impactful in meeting the changing needs of our Larimer County community. It drives our focus areas & helps us understand where we need to allocate resources & effort.

This plan was co-developed & driven by staff, & it was not a quick & simple process, nor are the goals simple or easy. It will take teamwork & collaboration to get it done. These efforts will usher us into the future of continuing to meet the needs of our community in exciting ways over the next 5 years!





Executive Summary

For over 100 years, Colorado State University Extension has helped people in Colorado. In partnership with county governments, our educators & specialists have helped Coloradans prevent & solve problems, build healthy people & strong communities. This document represents an effort undertaken to provide vision & strategic guidance to Larimer County Extension as we deal with an ever-evolving community & its needs. It represents several months of “discovery,” gathering input from staff & stakeholders to identify areas on which we can focus improvements, as well as analyzing a community survey to address current needs.

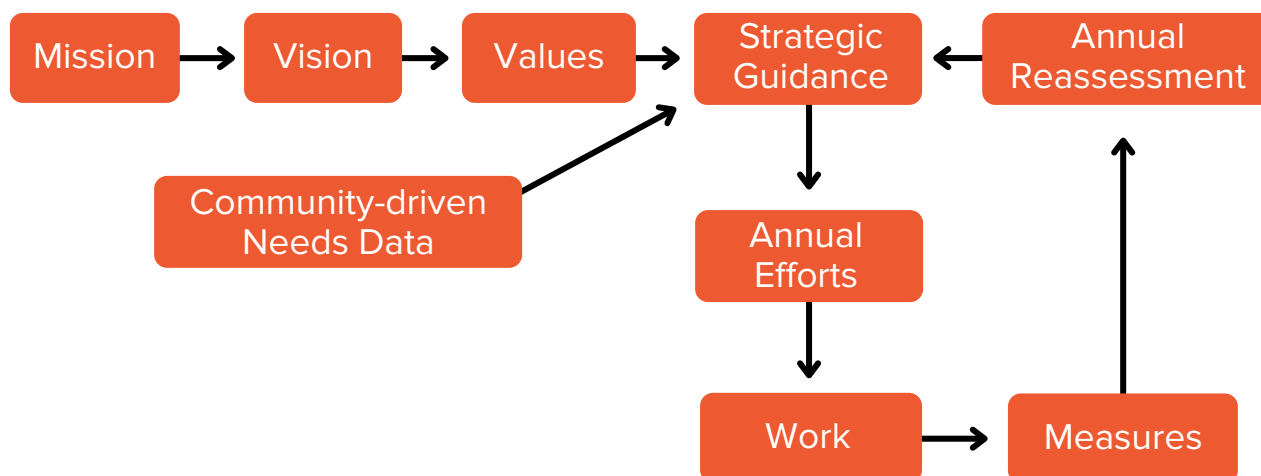
This document contains our foundational statements & our plan for how to realize our vision.

- Our Mission states what we “do” (this comes to us from CSU).
- Our 5-year Vision identifies how we see our organization in the near future & on which we base our strategic guidance.
- Our Values represent those characteristics that lead us toward our desired future & define our working culture.
- Our Strategic Priorities & Goals help us achieve our vision.

Why Strategic Guidance

- It helps create focus & direction above & beyond the great work we already do.
- It defines & determines priorities for 5 years.
- It maintains & enhances service level, addresses the changing environment & demographics of Northern Colorado.
- It creates alignment of staff values, community needs & resources to meet those needs.

Through a facilitated process, we reviewed our CSU Mission & developed our 5-year Vision. Our Values reflect the characteristics of behavior that enable our Vision. Then through a community-survey tool, we asked what things were most needed. This data helped us identify areas where we are actively contributing, areas we are or could partner, & areas that might be gaps. This information fed into the Strategic Guidance which attempts to select priority focus areas in the next 5 years where we can realistically contribute.

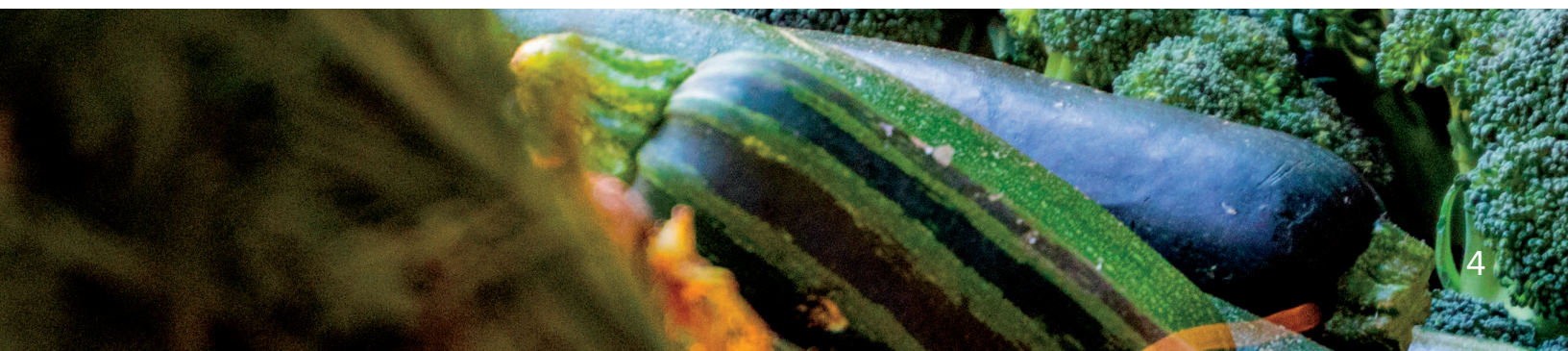




Timeline

Our strategic journey analysis began in 2020 in the midst of a pandemic. Despite the challenges of moving discussions, teamwork & retreats to an online platform, we were able to work through organization “re-forming”, a Community Needs Assessment, & the strategic planning process. We had help from CSU’s Institute for Research in Social Sciences in collecting community survey data, & the Larimer County’s Performance Improvement team who facilitated & managed the strategic guidance process.

- Discovery & research into the history & composition of Extension.
- We reviewed our CSU Extension Mission, Vision, & Values & developed a Vision & set of Values specific to our organization.
- We analyzed data from the Community Needs Assessment to identify potential growth areas.
- We followed an industry best practice process for developing 5-year Strategic Priorities, Goals & Objectives.
- We are now developing detailed annual project plans to implement the Strategic Guidance.





CSU Extension Mission

Empower Coloradoans to address important & emerging community issues using dynamic, science-based educational resources



Our 5-Year Vision

Our intentional work culture is one of respect, professionalism, & collaboration. We value working together across content areas & programs while connecting community members to resources & science-based information. We are known for being inclusive, innovative & responsive to our community's needs. Extension is recognized as a source of reliable, factual information.



Our Values

These are the values we will focus on to bring about our 5-Year Vision:

- Professionalism
- Teamwork & Collaboration
- Trust
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Innovation, Agility & Creativity
- Leadership



Our Guiding Principles (Larimer County)

We adopt & follow the Larimer County Guiding Principles:

- Being good stewards of public resources
- Promoting innovation & continuous improvement
- Providing quality customer service
- Empowering people to take responsibility
- Cultivating partnerships
- Being a fulfilling & enjoyable place to work





2021 - 2026 Strategic Guidance

A 5-year strategic plan provides direction for our organization & places emphasis on the areas where we wish to see measurable improvements or additions. It does not represent all the work at Extension, only the strategic focus areas. By successfully implementing this plan over the next 5 years, we position the organization & our services to best address the changing demographics & needs of our Larimer County community.

The Strategic Guidance Highlights

- Priorities*: The high-level areas/themes where we focus our efforts
- Goals: What needs to be accomplished to address priority areas
- Objectives: Time-bound items that need to be accomplished in order to achieve goals

*As all priorities are important, they are listed in no specific order.



Priority: Invest in Extension's People

Goal 1: We work together in a teaming culture

Objectives:

1. Develop & implement a plan to define an intentional work culture, reinforce our Values, encourage teaming/collaboration & appropriately integrate Values into our hiring & evaluation processes.
2. Create a process for how we share information & make decisions.
3. We work across programs to manage (recruitment, liability, appreciation, recognition, training, etc.) & communicate with volunteers.
4. We have a consistent volunteer management process across programs.
5. Create a staff development plan & implement activities to grow professionally & develop new skills.



Priority: Maximize our Organization's Effectiveness

Goal 2: Make our current processes more efficient

Objectives:

1. Develop an analysis of current common processes. Create a process for how we share information & make decisions.
2. Identify key process improvements & implement changes.
3. Investigate & deploy appropriate technologies for new processes.



Priority: Increase Extension's Visibility

Goal 3: We are known in the community as a source of reliable, factual information

Objectives:

1. Develop & implement an ongoing marketing & outreach plan.
2. Develop an active database of resources/partners to use for connecting people to resources we may not offer.
3. Develop effective measurement tools to assess program impact & audience information.



Priority: Meet the Needs of Our Community

Goal 4: Based on a Community Needs Assessment, we've prioritized key areas where Extension can contribute

Objectives:

1. Develop program plans to meet identified needs.
2. Analyze our audiences & adapt programming to evolving needs, equity/inclusion, & changing environment.
3. Co-develop the next Community Needs Assessment as an ongoing renewal effort to ensure we keep pace with the community's changes.



Community Needs Assessment - Gap Analysis

For Goal 4 we went through a rigorous analysis to identify:

- Community needs
- Whether we are currently meeting those needs
- If someone else in the community is meeting those needs
- Organizations we can partner with
- Possible areas to contribute more in the future.

Community Makeup - Demographics*

SELF-IDENTIFIED
ETHNIC
MINORITIES



10.8%
STATE: 20.8%

UNEMPLOYMENT
RATE



5.5%
STATE: 6.4%

MEDIAN
AGE



35.9
STATE: 36.6

MEDIAN
INCOME



\$72,227
STATE: \$73,219

POPULATION
IN POVERTY



5.7%
STATE: 7.2%

COLLEGE
DEGREE



45.1%
STATE: 38.8%

*REFERENCES AVAILABLE AT LARIMEREXTENSION.ORG



Community Needs

Priority issues arising from our review of secondary data, interviews with key informants, & a community survey included:



Choosing sustainable landscapes



Developing youth life skills



Emergency preparedness



Food handling/safety practices/certifications



Healthy food preparation/cooking



Helping communities cope with rapid growth



Managing & maintaining trees/yards/landscapes



Mental health/stress management for youth



Mental health/stress management/suicide prevention



Personal/family financial management & planning



Physical activity & health



Supporting local food production & distribution



Supporting nonprofit & issue-based organizations



Sustainable energy



Water quality



Larimer County Extension Top Priorities

Legend

- Covered by current programs
- Targeted for expanded focus
- TBD - Next tier, need info, community partners working on



HOUSEHOLD, FAMILY, & FINANCES

- Emergency preparedness
- Personal financial management
- Support for the aging, resources, & caregivers
- Radon mitigation & healthy homes
- Support for grandparents raising grandchildren



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- Mental health & stress management for youth
- Developing youth life & leadership skills
- Prepping students for college & career



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Increase access to CSU resources*
- Support non-profits & coalitions*
- Foster connections between rural & urban
- Facilitating difficult conversations

*THESE TWO GOALS WERE INCORPORATED INTO OUTREACH/ MARKETING IN TIER 1 ON PAGE 11.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

- Physical health & exercise
- Nutrition & healthy cooking
- Mental health & stress management



FOOD & AGRICULTURE

- Supporting local food productions & distribution
- Food handling & safety practices
- Supporting new farmers
- Hobby farm & ranch land management



NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

- Water quality & conservation
- Sustainable energy



YARD, PROPERTY, & LAND MANAGEMENT

- Maintaining trees, gardens, & landscapes
- Outdoor pests & insects
- Small acreage management
- Composting



Community Needs Assessment Prioritization

Through a prioritization exercise, areas of community impact were broken into two tiers. As our Extension Office looks to increase our community impacts, we will focus first on Tier 1 topics, identifying individual goals & objectives under each impact area & revisiting them annually to assess progress.

Tier 1:

- Mental health & stress management (youth & adult)
- Emergency preparedness
- Nutrition & healthy cooking
- Life skills & leadership for youth
- Outreach/ marketing
- Family financials

Tier 2:

- Prepping youth for college
- Climate change
- Support for caregivers of aging adults
- Facilitating difficult conversations
- Foster connections between rural & urban

Community Solutions for Areas Targeted for Expanded Focus

Household, Family, & Finances

To address the need for residents to be prepared for emergencies:



- Educate residents including youth on how to be better prepared for emergencies such as fires, floods, & drought.

To address the need for financial stability & self-sufficiency.



- Help individuals & families manage personal finances & be more prepared in case of emergency.

Youth Development

To address lower high school graduation rates & more limited career pathways for Hispanic & other youth:



- Support life skill development & pipelines into college & career.

To address rising rates of depression:



- Increase youth awareness of & connections to mental health resources to address rising rates of depression.

Health & Wellbeing

To address growing rates of social isolation, parental anxiety, substance abuse, & suicide:



- Improve access to mental health information & resources.
- Improve the nutrition & food practices of County residents, with a focus on low-income & older adults.

Food & Agriculture

To proactively address food safety at commercial restaurant establishments & be responsive to recent code requirements:



- Increase the use of research-based food safety practices
- Grow the number of restaurant employees who become Certified Food Protection Managers.



LARIMER COUNTY

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