

NATIONAL EXTENSION CLIMATE INITIATIVE

VALUE, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, NEEDS



The National Extension Climate Initiative (NECI) serves as an anchor for Extension professionals, researchers, and partners to collaborate on climate-related issues, share resources, discuss barriers and opportunities for advancing climate change programming in Extension, and engage in professional development opportunities. Since 2020, NECI has successfully accelerated and uplifted Extension climate change programming. Our effectiveness is evidenced by a network of over 800 members, an active Executive Committee, six working groups, and monthly professional development and member engagement opportunities. Members engage from across the US, representing over 80 distinct institutions including universities, tribal and community colleges, nonprofit organizations, federal, state, and local agencies.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO-DATE

- Invited to provide input to the White House on development of its recently released (September, 2023) National Climate Resilience Framework.
- With leadership from the Western Rural Development Center, formalized NECI Executive Committee Operating Guidelines, Working Groups, and value propositions as well as administrative support through a \$124,000 New Technologies for Agricultural Extension (NTAE) grant, titled National Extension Climate Action Team, completed in 2023.
- Adopted the EcoActUs curriculum (www.ecoactus.org/neci) as a climate change Extension education resource in 2023. NECI members also contributed Water Systems and Regenerative Agriculture-themed updates to the EcoActUs curriculum.
- Drafted a national vision and objectives for climate change work in Extension in 2022, now posted on national Extension's Extension Committee on Organization and Policy's Climate Mitigation, Resiliency, and Adaptation page.
- Provided recommendations on the President's Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad as a partnership between 15 Extension professionals and department heads in 2021 upon request from USDA NIFA.
- Published NECI Action Items with input from Extension colleagues nationwide in 2021 to advance climate change programming in Extension, stemming from our national forum.
- Hosted a three-day action forum in April 2021 with over 350 participants to elevate and amplify climate action across the Cooperative Extension Service.
- Published Extension Climate & Extreme Weather Programming: Successes, Challenges & Opportunities national report in 2020. Led a national search and call for Extension climate change programming and conducted a national qualitative research study on successes, opportunities and challenges in Extension climate change programming through a \$20,000 Extension Foundation grant.



INCREASING NECI'S IMPACT

NECI functions remarkably well as a network of volunteer professionals and has evolved rapidly. However, we have greater ambitions and are confident we could do much more to support Extension programming that meets the increasingly urgent challenges posed by climate change. We have identified the following priorities that would enable us to significantly increase our impact through new steps in organizational development and associated programming.

Major Priorities to Boost NECI's Effectiveness

Our top priorities are to:

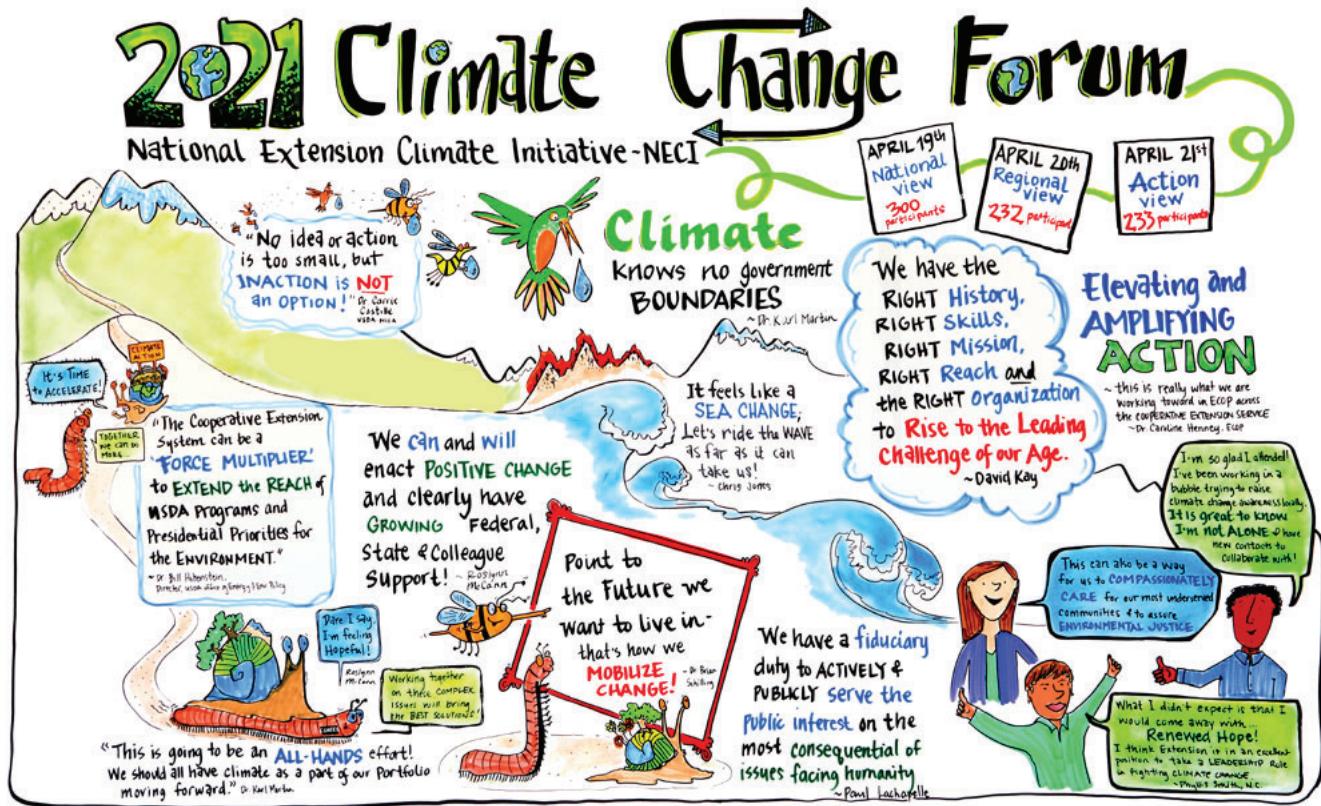
- Secure a multi-million dollar, multi-institution grant to execute a large-scale national effort to advance climate change programming.
- Secure funds for dedicated staff to support critical organizational and Executive Committee functions. Support would include:
 - One FTE to support the Executive Committee and working group functions
 - One FTE to develop, sustain, and expand critical communications,
 - One FTE to assist in obtaining funding, track relevant national and state legislative initiatives, and recruit members.
- Explicit statements from national and state Extension leadership on climate change work as a priority.

Other funding priorities include:

- i. Addressing Extension-facing research priorities identified by the ECOP (Extension Committee on Organization and Policy) Climate Priority Action Team.
- ii. Implementation of priority projects and initiatives identified by NECI working groups.
- iii. Vetting and development of climate curricula suited for integration into major Extension program areas for a variety of Extension constituencies.
- iv. Building relational approaches across worldviews and knowledge forms through communities of practice.
- v. Training to prepare and mobilize national, regional, and state teams of land grant educators and researchers for delivery of quality climate adaptation and mitigation programming and curricula.
- vi. Addressing climate ready workforce development in rural communities.

INCREASING NECI'S IMPACT (Continued)

- Partnering with EDEN (Extension Disaster Education Network) to leverage existing resources, build capacity among Extension educators and their respective communities, and identify and create new resources and programming on disaster preparedness and blueprints for local resilience planning.
- Building stronger relationships with the climate change research community.
- Hiring regional and/or state FTEs to:
 - i. Assess state-by-state Extension climate change programming and impacts (building on the work of our 2020 climate/extreme weather fellowship)
 - ii. Map which states are taking climate actions, including what programming and positions are being offered and where.
 - iii. Conduct a national needs assessment of what major partners, Extension influencers, and clientele want and/or need to know with regards to climate change.
 - iv. Build Extension capacity through a coordinated national climate change professional development training program internal to Extension.



AUTHORS

Utah State University

R. McCann: Professor & Sustainable Communities Extension Specialist

Cornell University

D. Kay: Senior Extension Associate, Global Development

J. Wightman: Senior Extension Associate, Integrative Plant Science, Soil, and Crop Sciences

Extension Foundation

R. Emmons: Climate Partnership & Development Assistant

C. Ross: University of Vermont Retired Director of Extension, Climate Catalyst

Iowa State

J. Arbuckle: Professor, Rural Sociology

Montana State University

P. Lachapelle: Professor, Political Science

New Mexico State University

W. Hamilton: Professor Emeritus, Retired Program Evaluation & Grant Development Specialist

Pacific Islands Climate Adaptation Science Center

S. Laursen: Climate Change Adaptation Extension Specialist

Purdue University

H. Schmitz: Extension Educator, Climate Smart Agriculture & Soil Health Coordinator

Southern Rural Development Center

J. Green: Professor & Director

University of Florida

L. Seals: Regional Specialized Agent, Community Resource Development

R. Schumann: Seminole County Extension Master Gardener

J. Kipp: Sustainable Communities State Specialized Agent

University of Illinois

S. Kar: Assistant Dean, Natural Resources, Environment, and Energy Program Leader

Washington State University

T. Morgan: Tribal Extension Co-PI and Coordinator

Western Rural Development Center

B. Newman: Associate Director

Designed by: Michael Langenehim with Utah State University Extension Marketing

Updated October 18, 2023



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