

University of Rhode Island
Cooperative Extension
2017-2021 Strategic Plan
Public Input Meeting

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
EXTENSION

For More Information:
web.uri.edu/epimeeting
Email: outreach@uri.edu
Phone: (401) 874-2900

Statement of Purpose

URI Extension provides non-formal education and learning opportunities to Rhode Islanders, working with people from rural communities to urban areas across our state. We specialize in translating research results into information people can use to improve their lives and strengthen their families, communities and businesses. We engage with those we serve to understand their needs and bring the resources of the university to the public.

Strategic Areas of Focus

URI Cooperative Extension is committed to:

- Strengthening Rhode Island's food and agricultural system,
- Advancing healthy lifestyles,
- Strengthening land stewardship,
- Protecting and improving the quality of water resources, and
- Supporting sustainable energy production, efficiency and conservation.



Block Island (photo by Aya Rothwell)

Food Systems and Agriculture

Goal

By 2021, URI Cooperative Extension will have strengthened Rhode Island's food and agricultural system by increasing Rhode Island's capacity to produce, process and provide safe and nutritious food.

Sub-goals

By 2021, URI Cooperative Extension will have:

1. Designed, demonstrated and evaluated agriculture and aquaculture techniques on university farms and facilities that support environmentally sustainable and profitable food production practices, especially those techniques focused on season extension (fruits and vegetables) and on aquaculture in coordination with Sea Grant;
2. Expanded Rhode Island's capacity to produce food in developed environments including school and community gardens and urban farms;
3. Provided growers with information and technical assistance on crop diversification and innovation with special emphasis on helping new farmers expand opportunities to achieve commercial viability;
4. Provided the Rhode Island food production, processing and service sectors with information and technical assistance to improve food safety practices and to meet federal and state regulatory expectations;
5. Expanded educational opportunities to Rhode Island consumers and youth regarding food and agriculture to increase understanding of food production, safe food handling, gardening and ecosystem value; and
6. Partnered with other organizations to coordinate services for farmers and other food- and agriculture-related businesses.

Healthy Lifestyles

Goal

By 2021, URI Cooperative Extension will have strengthened the ability of Rhode Islanders to take actions that promote healthy lifestyles and result in improved nutrition and physical activity, reduced risk of vector-borne diseases and improved physical, social and emotional health.

Sub-goals

By 2021, URI Cooperative Extension will have:

1. Contributed to reduction of obesity-related disease in Rhode Island by teaching behavior-change techniques that increase intake of nutrient-dense foods and increase physical activity. Interactive community-based activities and social media are among the means that will be employed to achieve this result;
2. Increased “tick literacy” among Rhode Islanders and others to promote behaviors that prevent tick-borne disease using engaging, multi-channel education and technical assistance programs targeted especially to community members of high-risk towns, outdoor workers, health professionals, school children and pest managers; and
3. Improved the physical, social and emotional well-being of 4-H youth ages 5 to 19 by expanding activities, events and educational experiences related to the “Healthy Living” mission mandate.

Land Stewardship

Goal

By 2021, URI Cooperative Extension will have provided leadership, information and guidance on the stewardship of land including urban, suburban, rural and coastal landscapes to achieve ecosystem resilience, water resource protection, and economic and agricultural viability.

Sub-goals

By 2021, URI Cooperative Extension will have:

1. Modeled and demonstrated agricultural techniques to increase agricultural productivity through implementation of best management practices;
2. Increased capacity of public and private landowners and conservation organizations to apply best stewardship practices to achieve ecosystem resilience and increase the use of effective green infrastructure;
3. Ensured ready access to essential information (spatial, economic, and social) to decision makers and landowners to support resource management decisions;
4. Increased public awareness of the connections between economic viability, quality of life, environmental health and food security resulting from land-use decision making; and
5. Assisted in urban farm, park and open space development to include measures that address climate change and native wildlife enhancement.

Water Resources

Goal

By 2021, URI Cooperative Extension will have expanded the capacity of Rhode Islanders to assess water resources and apply management practices to restore and protect water resources.

Sub-goals

By 2021, URI Cooperative Extension will have:

1. Increased the capacity of citizen groups, the public and private sectors to use and contribute to the assessment of the status and trends of watersheds, streams, rivers, ponds and estuaries;
2. Increased the capacity of the public and private sector to implement storm water controls and green infrastructure practices to reduce risk of flooding and improve water quality;
3. Increased the capacity of local officials, public water suppliers, future leaders and households with private wells to protect drinking water;
4. Worked with State and Federal partners to increase targeted implementation of best management practices for agricultural and plant-based industries to enhance water resources while sustaining economic vitality; and
5. Enhanced the capacity of the private sector to upgrade onsite wastewater treatment for water quality improvement.

Energy Efficiency, Conservation and Renewable Energy

Goal

By 2021, URI Cooperative Extension will have prepared Rhode Islanders to face current and future energy challenges by developing and implementing measures for sustainable energy production, efficiency and conservation.

Sub-goals

By 2021, URI Cooperative Extension will have:

1. Increased Rhode Islanders' energy literacy through education and outreach on contemporary energy challenges;
2. Brought about behavioral change in individuals, businesses, communities and agencies to increase sustainable energy production, efficiency and conservation;
3. Provided workforce development to support the energy sector in the State of Rhode Island; and
4. Expanded the scope of energy programs at the University of Rhode Island.