

Blurring State Lines – Multi-State Metro Best Practices

A Panel Presentation at the 2019 National Urban Extension Conference

Wednesday, May 22, 2019 – Seattle, WA

Marlin Bates, County Extension Director, K-State Research and Extension – Douglas County, batesm@ksu.edu
Nozella Brown, County Extension Director, K-State Research and Extension – Wyandotte County, nlbrown2@ksu.edu
Paul Gibbins, Executive Director, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach – Polk County, pgibbins@iastate.edu
Tara Markley, County Extension Director, K-State Research and Extension – Johnson County, tara.markley@jocogov.org
Jody Squires, Regional Director, University of Missouri Extension – Urban East, squiresj@missouri.edu

Session Description:

Recently, Kansas, Missouri and Iowa Extension Professionals embarked on two initiatives to foster connections among urban-serving Extension Professionals. This session will highlight the perspectives of Urban County Extension Directors on the key concepts that led to these initiatives. Panelists will share insights, challenges and lessons to encourage attendees to open similar pathways between local units--adjacent and afar. All materials related to this session are posted at <https://www.douglas.k-state.edu/community/blurringstatelines.html>.

Abstract:

How can small, local Extension units meet the needs of large, urban/suburban communities? Across the country, collaboration among local Extension units regularly occurs when delivering relevant programming. However, urban-serving Extension Professionals who are faced with the unique issues of metropolitan areas, can often feel isolated from peers. Addressing geographic isolation of larger urban areas that are served by multiple Extension Units, or in some cases the sole Extension Unit, requires dedicating time to intentional collaboration.

Efforts to set the stage for relationship development and idea exchange among urban-serving Extension Professionals do exist, but these efforts are often at a national or regional scale and occur over the course of several days. This format is valuable for those who are able to participate; however, it does not lend itself to full inclusion of educators within most units. An alternative format explored by the panelists provides an affordable, approachable strategy that can be deployed regularly to align programmatic efforts, and build relationships among an ever-changing Extension workforce at all levels throughout metropolitan regions.

By proactively expanding networks within and among the institutions, urban-serving Extension Professionals position themselves to capitalize more effectively on the distinguishing characteristic of Extension--the ability to provide interdisciplinary technical assistance and programming. Furthermore, stronger networks and increased collaboration create a structure for programmatic efforts that withstand organizational changes, cementing Extension's role as a backbone organization for community-wide issues. By virtue of these attributes and by strengthening the Extension fabric, these Extension Professionals present an undeniably strong commitment to collective impact work that will be actively sought in each community.

K-STATE
Research and Extension

 **Extension**
University of Missouri

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach