

Cornell University Cooperative Extension



HELPING NEW YORKERS IMPROVE THEIR LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

RENEWING CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION:

**A Leadership Assessment and Position for
Effective and Sustainable
Program Development and Delivery**

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Vision Statement.....	1
Intent	1
Defining Assumptions	2
Requisite Characteristics of Future Program Development/Delivery Systems	3
Program Development and Delivery Structures	3
Operations and Governance.....	5
Potential Unintended Consequences	5
Developmental Efforts.....	5
How is this Different from What We Have?.....	7
Assumptions for Moving Ahead.....	7
Appendix I - Design Considerations for Regional/Multi-County Program Collaboration	8
Appendix II – Assumptions for Moving Ahead	11

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Developments in the state and local economy make it unlikely that Cornell Cooperative Extension will be able to achieve its mandate to provide equitable access to program resources statewide solely through the current structure of county-based associations. At the same time, educational needs in established and emerging program areas and new modes of learning among our audiences create exceptional opportunities for our system. A new structure is proposed that supplements the associations with enhanced regional program networks and campus-based program initiatives delivered via statewide networks or teams. The regional program networks will focus on priority content areas which are aligned with federal and state priorities and local needs. The campus-based initiatives will focus on emergent issues, issues not uniformly present statewide, and/or core functions more effectively or efficiently carried out centrally. The new structure will complement association-based programming where local support is strong, and provide access to extension programming where local support erodes below a critical level.

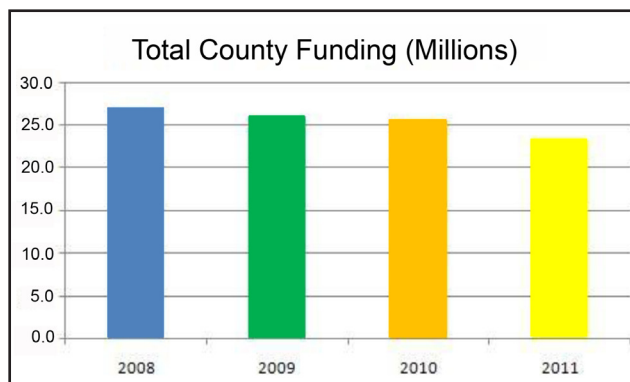
VISION STATEMENT

Cornell Cooperative Extension is a national leader in creating positive change on behalf of individuals and communities through evidence-based extension programs. Its efforts are focused in content areas that align local needs with the resources and priorities of the land grant system and its state and federal partners. Its dynamic programs are delivered through flexible and highly efficient program networks blending regional applied research and extension initiatives, campus-based initiatives, and high quality, high impact local programming relevant to established program priorities.

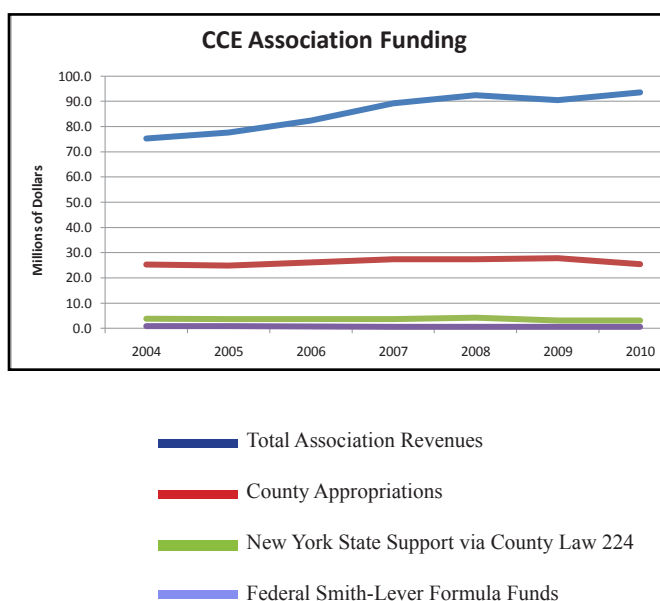
INTENT

This document was developed by senior leadership of Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Administration to focus deliberation and action to strengthen the system. The purpose is to position CCE to effectively address the priority needs of the residents of New York now and for the foreseeable future through high quality and high impact extension education programming that effectively draws on and informs the research of the land grant system. This document addresses the dramatically changing and challenging economic and social climate of New York State and anticipates the significant opportunity presented by the commitment of Cornell University to assess and recommit to its outreach and engagement initiatives.

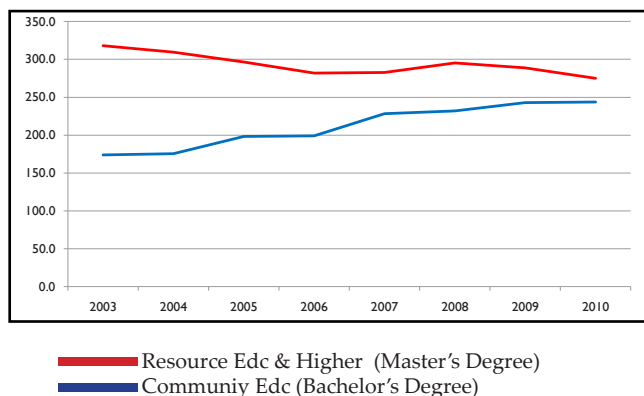
County Government Funding 2008-2011



Funding Source Trends



Program Leadership Capacity Decrease in Master's Level Educators



DEFINING ASSUMPTIONS

- Federal equal program opportunity compliance regulations require that Extension Administration ensure educational opportunities are available to a diverse audience of the State on a non-discriminatory basis. Failing to do so statewide jeopardizes Cornell Cooperative Extension's eligibility for federal funding.
- Given developments in the state and local economy and changing roles of all levels of government, it will not be possible to achieve our mandate for equitable access to program benefits solely through the current structure of county-based extension associations as it is; there likely will be adequate support to maintain quality programming in some localities but not in others. Coverage will vary significantly across program areas.
- Effective partnerships between federal, state, and local governments are foundational to the Cooperative Extension system and CCE system. It is the responsibility of Extension Administration, as defined in Cornell University's Memorandum of Understanding with USDA and County Law 224, to ensure such partnerships exist.
- Partnerships with associations or others must be based on meaningful, substantive shared resources; token investments cannot sustain effective partnerships or effective programs. It is neither feasible nor appropriate for CCE Administration to attempt to preserve local units at all costs to the detriment of our statewide obligations once local support has eroded below a critical level as determined by the Director of Extension.
- New structuring options will be needed, including provision for different forms of associations at different levels of investment/partnering.

REQUISITE CHARACTERISTICS OF FUTURE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/DELIVERY SYSTEMS

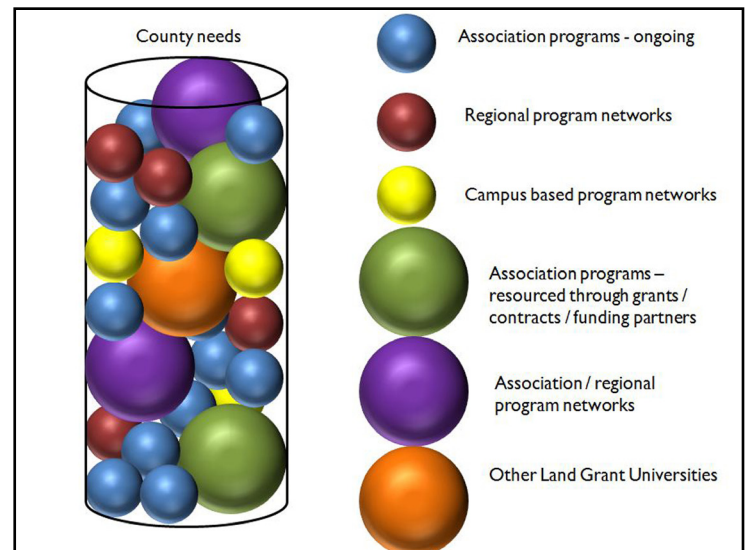
- To justify investment of extension resources, programs must be true to the extension educational mission, have a strong basis in research evidence, and/or be connected to ongoing programs of research at Cornell.
- Program leadership must be provided by a combination of campus-based faculty and staff and a network of highly qualified educators capable of anticipating applied research and extension needs, partnering effectively with faculty, and adapting statewide initiatives to local and regional contexts.
- By virtue of state and federal support for our system, we must provide statewide, equitable access for priority content and audiences through methods that are responsive to the changing ways through which those audiences access information and educational resources.
- Priority system-wide emphases must align needs and opportunities of New Yorkers with federal, land grant system, and college and University priorities.
- Program models should be evidence-based and/or actively assessed for impact; they must be documented to have appropriate outcomes and impacts, including economic impacts.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY STRUCTURES

A combination of mechanisms will be required to provide equitable program coverage and forward looking, agile, and impactful programs. Three forms of programming are envisioned.

A. System-wide Programs Delivered via Regional Program Networks

- Youth development programs built around the three mission mandates and including effective volunteer leadership and management
- Agriculture and food systems programs developed from full implementation of regional teams
- Nutrition and health programs built from documented best practices derived from the current regional team approach
- Local government/policy education relevant to these and other topics as applicable to the region involved, including clear focus on economic development



B. Program Initiatives Delivered via Campus-Based Teams

- Parenting Education (current example)
- Energy and Climate Change (current pilot)
- Sustainable Communities (potential future)
- Local government/policy education included as appropriate, including clear focus on economic development

C. **Association-Based Program Initiatives** -- Efforts clearly within the educational mission of CCE that extend the resources of the land grant system to the benefit of local residents. Support for these efforts is generated locally. Availability of CCE system benefits and protections dependent upon receipt and approval of viable program proposal.

There are several distinctions between the Regional Program Networks approach and the Campus-based Network approach. **Regional Program Networks** build on demonstrated system strengths including proven collaborative program development and delivery models and effective leadership and governance structures employed to provide comprehensive, future-oriented, and impactful programming directed to established program priorities.

The **Regional Program Networks** approach assumes:

- There are common needs statewide that allow for standard staffing patterns while allowing for adaptation to regional and local needs (for example, by emphasizing different commodities).
- That a “network” may or may not be based on physical co-location of educators to serve a defined region as determined by the program areas being addressed and logistical considerations.
- Complementary local programming is likely to continue in many locales in coordination with the regional network.
- In locales where local support no longer allows for substantive local initiatives, mechanisms will exist for providing access to basic program opportunities.
- Consistent program development and delivery approaches will be employed across regions, derived from successful current practices and incorporating new approaches where needed.
- The needs for and benefits of distributed, strong program leadership staffing across the state are clear and justify a network-based approach.

The **Campus-based Network Approach** is most appropriate to emergent programs, to programs in transition, including those being considered for de-emphasis, efforts not distributed evenly across the state, and/or core functions carried out most effectively or efficiently centrally. As a result, the Campus-based Network approach assumes:

- That a highly structured or uniform staffing approach is difficult, premature, or inappropriate because of one of the following:
 - Priority program content and delivery methods are still emerging or in high transition
 - Association- or regionally-based programs are not uniformly dispersed across the state
 - Highly specialized staffing is needed to carry out core functions state wide.
- Local program involvement will be highly variable, at least initially.
- Program development and delivery models likely will be more fluid with numerous regional and/or local adaptations.
- As programs focus and mature, it may be appropriate to transition these efforts to the Regional Program Network approach if needs warrant, effectiveness is proven, and clear models emerge. Similarly, efforts carried out via regional networks may appropriately transition to statewide teams in the future.

Anticipated Benefits of Regional Program Networks are that they would:

- Allow associations to draw complementary support and program coverage for their local programs in clearly identified, priority program areas.
- Provide CCE with a sustainable means for meeting its federal obligation to provide equitable statewide access to priority program areas.
- Ensure that a cadre of high-level educators will be available for system-level applied research and extension program partnerships, supplemented by local partnerships where appropriate and feasible.
- Achieve economies of scale through consistent program development and implementation models and accountability structures.

Anticipated Benefits of Campus-based Networks are that they would:

- Provide a highly flexible structure for:
 - Supporting program efforts not evenly distributed across the state
 - Gearing up for emergent or transitioning program needs offering an adaptable alternative to sustained efforts addressed through the Regional Program Networks
 - Efficiently carry out state-wide core functions
- Allow exploration of new partnerships with campus-based initiatives and external partners around current and emergent issues of concern to our constituents and responsive to changing national and university priorities.
- Provide a means to tap into creative local program models as well as providing a statewide program development and delivery framework.

OPERATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

The structures and operational guidelines for Regional Program Networks will draw heavily from the success factor analysis for CCE collaborative efforts conducted in early 2010 and through review of existing approaches in use for commercial agriculture and nutrition programming. The 2010 success factor analysis is presented as Appendix I - Design Considerations for Regional/Multi-County Program Collaboration.

Organization and operations also will be informed by experiences with the Director's Special Call Regional Restructuring Grants, Shared Business Networks and continuing work with the Center for Governmental Research (CGR). Initial approaches for the Statewide Networks will derive in large part from a formal assessment of the current Energy and Climate Change initiative in partnership with the Cornell Office for Research on Evaluation.

POTENTIAL UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

A number of concerns about alternative program delivery strategies were identified by CCE Executive Directors through two surveys conducted in early 2010. Included among them were:

- Local governments and partners whose support for extension association-based programming is weak may cease support of local units if Regional Program Networks and Campus-based Teams are present. (Clear documentation and communication of local program impacts and benefits will be essential.)
- High level local staff may choose to pursue roles with Regional Program Networks eroding local competencies. (The Campus-based Network approach could offset this concern for some content areas in that one approach is to draw on and strengthen existing local staff.)
- Regional Program Networks and Campus-based Networks may compete more effectively for funding currently pursued by individual associations. (Clear mechanisms will be needed to allow partnering with local associations for statewide program initiatives.)
- Responsiveness to regional and local needs may be diminished. (Comprehensive needs and opportunity assessment processes must be reinstated to maximize responsiveness.)

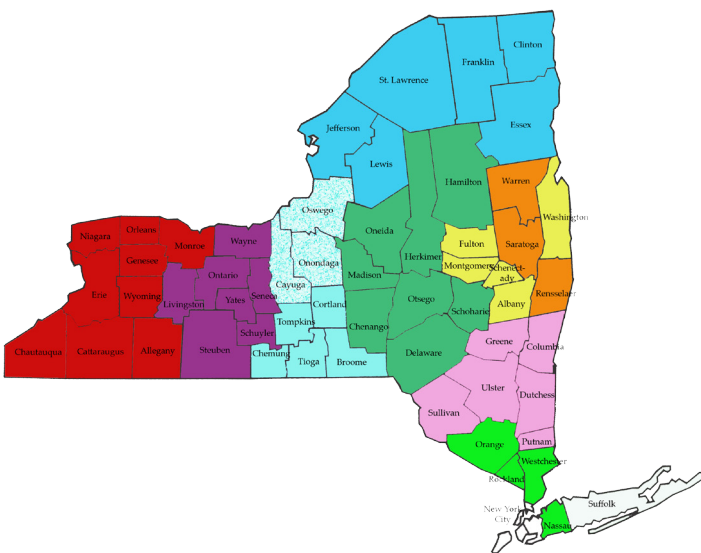
DEVELOPMENTAL EFFORTS

Many elements outlined above draw on successful strategies and important lessons learned from previous efforts. This includes literally decades of experience with formal and informal area teams and multi-county arrangements. That experience in particular shaped the guidelines cited in the Operations and Governance section above. Looking forward, we believe there are current structures

such as the Regional Nutrition Coordination approach that can and should inform approaches for other content areas. The CCE central databases project and the Key Contact approach employed for finance, human resources, and technology provide valuable insights for developing sustainable operations and infrastructure. The 2009 Director’s Call for Restructuring Projects and the 2010 Shared Business Networks Call have particular relevance.

- 2009 Director’s Call for Restructuring Projects** (roughly \$1 million investment over three years): The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) was to encourage and support collaborative efforts by groups of two or more CCE associations and/or area program teams to develop and implement more sustainable models for the delivery of extension program at the county level. The ultimate objective was to find new ways of doing business - new regional structures and organizational models - that improve program, align priorities, and reduce operating costs. Eleven projects were funded and are now in the implementation phase. Specific examples include the merger of two associations into one, development of regional 4H Youth development leadership, more effective use of volunteers, and regional advancement of information technology.

Shared Business Networks (SBN)



- 2010 Shared Business Networks** (roughly \$2.4 million investment over 3 years): A variety of circumstances precipitated the need for Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) to accelerate the transition to a business platform for associations and area teams that result in more consistent, effective, auditable, and accountable administrative practices. CCE associations were invited to elect regional groupings and to submit applications for financial support to develop Shared Business Networks. These “SBNs” will provide region-level financial, accounting, human resource (HR), and technology (IT) functions (the “business platform”) using standardized hardware, software, tools, policies, and procedures and will articulate with relevant university-level systems. Participating counties may elect to include additional functions if they so choose.

Twelve proposals were submitted in October 2010. Of these, five were fully funded to begin work in February, 2011, two required modification and were funded for a July, 2011 start. Three additional proposals should be submitted by September, 2011. SBN “lead” staff in HR, Finance, and IT will become the designated point of contact with university personnel on October 1, 2011.

HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM WHAT WE HAVE?

- Statewide program coverage and quality is guiding Extension Administration initiatives and investments.
- We are strategically planning for and utilizing three primary program delivery strategies – local, regional, and campus-based program networks – to provide comprehensive high quality programming for priority issues.
- Program leadership will be enhanced through investments by Extension Administration in campus-based and regional network leadership and staffing and incenting participation by associations.

ASSUMPTIONS FOR MOVING AHEAD

As with any conceptual planning document, implementation details and application to specific circumstances remain to be determined. However, it is possible to articulate primary assumptions that will guide implementation. These are listed in Appendix II - Assumptions for Moving Ahead.

**APPENDIX I - DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR REGIONAL/MULTI-COUNTY
PROGRAM COLLABORATION
JULY 2010**

Background This document identifies critical elements and best practices in collaborative programming. The intent is to provide a practical framework for developing new collaborations and/or strengthening existing collaborations.

The information included here was first developed by polling Executive Directors and members of Director's Council on the success factors and challenges in collaboration. A draft set of design considerations was developed from this input and reviewed during the June 2010 Executive Leadership Conference.

Anticipated Use A framework for regional/multi-county program collaboration must have sufficient flexibility to accommodate diverse programming contexts, differences across content areas and audiences, and uneven resources among collaborators. A single model cannot span such diverse needs and opportunities. Many different collaborative arrangements have evolved within CCE with varying geographic and content scopes and degrees of formality. Many associations participate in several collaborative arrangements with different geographic definitions. With that said, the design elements listed below were derived by assessment of our collaborative experience and current system needs and program quality standards. While the individual elements may take on different levels of importance depending on the collaboration, all elements should be considered. CCE Administration intends to invest its effort and resources on collaborations that meet these design considerations. Elements listed under "Nature of Program" are core to program collaboration and should be addressed explicitly. There is more flexibility in the "Nature of Partnership" and "Administration and Staffing" sections but they also require clear analysis and implementation plans.

I. Nature of Program

Agreed Upon Major Program Focus

- Alignment with the CCE mission and statewide plans of work, Cornell applied research and extension priorities, and/or NIFA priorities is documented
- Current needs/opportunity assessment data are documented and include direct input from potential audiences
- Content focus, priority audiences, and outcomes are specified (e.g., logic model or initial plan of work)
- The specific roles and contributions of CCE programming vis-à-vis other organizations are identified

Clearly Identified Content Resource Bases

- Current and potential campus connections are identified, informed, and engaged
- Existing strengths and contributions of CCE partners are identified
- Potential interdisciplinary relationships and relationships with programs in other geographic areas are identified
- Key external partnerships are identified

Documented Program Delivery Strategy

- Initial scope and sequence of program strategies and major activities are outlined (implementation plans)
- Plans exist for establishing and maintaining local presence
- Plans exist for audience maintenance and/or expansion
- If applicable, clear plans exist for volunteer development and management

Effective Program Input Processes

- Stakeholder input and advisement structures and processes are outlined
- Additional mechanisms for stakeholder input are identified

Documentation of Effectiveness

- Plans exist for program monitoring and accountability reporting
- Initial program outcome and impact documentation approaches are outlined

Program Leadership and Management

- Program leadership and management roles and expectations are articulated
- Leadership roles are recognized through modification of position expectations and performance management criteria
- Input mechanisms for partners regarding program leadership effectiveness are identified

II. Nature of Partnership

Demonstrated Commitment

- Decision makers including Board leadership are informed throughout the planning and collaborative process of the intended benefits and obligations of the partnership
- Partners formally commit to participation for a defined, multi-year period typically through a memorandum of agreement
- General contingency plans are agreed upon should a partner be unable to meet their obligations

Decision Making

- Governance and advisement structures are articulated
- Programmatic and administrative decision making roles and processes of partners and individuals are documented
- Mechanism for documenting and communicating decisions are identified

Equity Assurance

- Expectations of all partners are negotiated and agreed upon including both cost and program benefit
- Explicit plans are made to promote equitable access to program benefits (through effective delivery and local presence) and equitable cost sharing proportionate to benefit
- Mechanisms for monitoring perceived equity among partners are identified

Teamwork

- Roles of all partners are articulated
- Expectations of team(s) are documented
- Program teams develop plans of work and implementation plans and communicate same to partners
- Mechanisms for monitoring and assessing team effectiveness are identified

Communication and Coordination

- Communication needs are defined and mechanisms identified
- Coordination needs are defined and mechanisms identified
- Plans exist for assessing communication effectiveness

Developing Common Culture

- Plans exist for direct interaction among partners to further commonality
- Assumptions, beliefs, and goals for the partnership are articulated and agreed upon
- Programmatic and operational quality standards and indicators are agreed upon
- Plans exist for monitoring and responding to partner perceptions of the collaboration

III. Administration and Staffing

Administrative Leadership and Management

- Administrative leadership and management roles and expectations are identified
- Faculty leadership roles and expectations are identified (as applicable)
- Leadership roles are recognized formally including modification of position expectations and performance management criteria
- Input mechanisms for partners regarding administrative leadership effectiveness are identified

Staffing

- Staffing needs are documented specifically including program leadership and management, content specialization, program support, and administrative leadership, management and support needs
- Staffing contributions of each partner are identified and agreed upon and position expectations and performance management criteria are documented
- Staff relationships are defined, i.e., ties to CCE system initiatives, PWTs, faculty, departments etc.
- Performance management responsibilities and processes are identified and agreed upon

Funding

- Initial cost analysis has been conducted including liability considerations
- Basis for cost sharing is documented and agreed upon
- Alignment to potential future funding sources
- Funding plans for the initial partnership agreement are detailed and longer-term funding plans outlined
- Criteria and mechanisms for monitoring and assessing cost effectiveness and cost sharing are identified

APPENDIX II – ASSUMPTIONS FOR MOVING AHEAD MARCH 2011

Foundational Assumptions

- Doing nothing, in effect adopting a survival of the fittest approach, is an abrogation of Extension Administration's leadership responsibility to the system and the citizens of New York.
- We need to develop approaches that simultaneously complement and strengthen association-based programming while providing coverage where association-based programming is limited or absent.
- We have a strong experience base in collaborative programming in various forms of program networks from which to draw best practices and identify risks.
- We are creating approaches that enhance opportunities for applied research and extension integration and partnering between faculty and extension educators in priority content areas.

Implementation Assumptions

Participation

- Highest quality and impact programs result when associations become fully involved with multiple forms of program networks (campus-based, regional, local)
- Associations retain their obligation to meet program quality and impact criteria, accreditation standards, and memoranda of understanding requirements regardless of participation in regional or campus-based networks.
- Extension Administration will direct its primary resources to fostering high impact campus-based and regional program networks and incent participation by associations.

Structure

- Program networks should be flexible enough to meet differing needs.
- Program networks will build on successful current collaborations to the extent feasible rather than supplanting them.
- Existing and potential program networks can and should adapt over time. Networks may retire as needs or audiences decline. New initiatives explored via one form of network may assume another form at maturity. Existing program networks may shift to a different form as needs, audiences, or resources shift.
- The business platform for program networks will be provided through Shared Business Networks.

Timeframe

- Prototyping the program network structure will begin in the current year wherever there is sufficient interest and commitment to do so.
- Different elements will move forward at different rates in different venues as key questions are answered. Examples include implications of the new funding context for nutrition, clarification of the resource base and emphases of 4-H youth development, and, clarification of local government investment.
- The program network structure for core programs will be fully identified and initial phases implemented within three years.

Covering Gaps

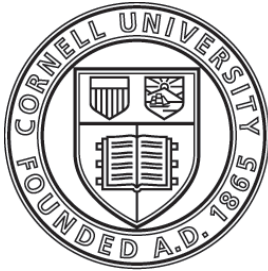
- A base level of access for selected priority programs will be provided through campus-based or regional program networks where associations are not capable of doing so; such coverage may or may not be via direct audience programming in local venues but may be via a variety of delivery strategies including distance education as determined by needs and resources.

NOTES



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