

# Informing the Strategic Priorities of Extension: A Community Engagement Strategy



Bo Beaulieu & Michael Wilcox  
Purdue University



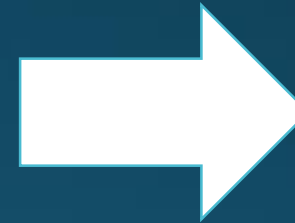
Presented at the 2015 Meeting of NACDEP – Little Rock, AR  
May 18, 2015

# A Brief Overview

- Dean of the College of Agriculture launched a new five-year strategic planning effort in Fall 2014.
- Extension wanted to weigh in on the substance of that plan. Opted to seek input and advice from stakeholders across the state.
- The most critical question at that point: “What process would we employ to capture the insights of Indiana residents?”
- Decided to embrace a series of community forums across the state.



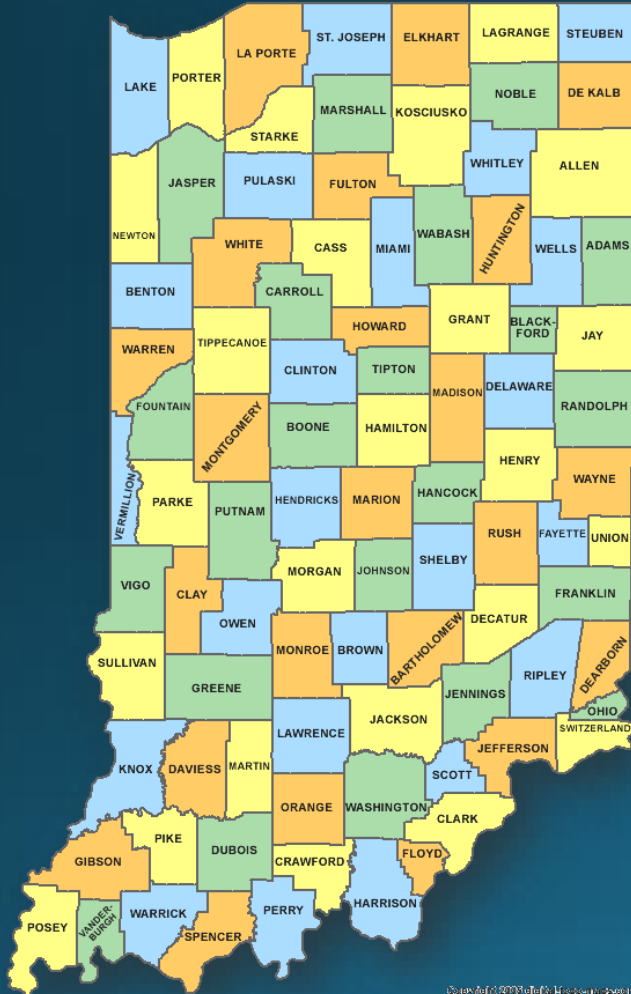
# The Steps



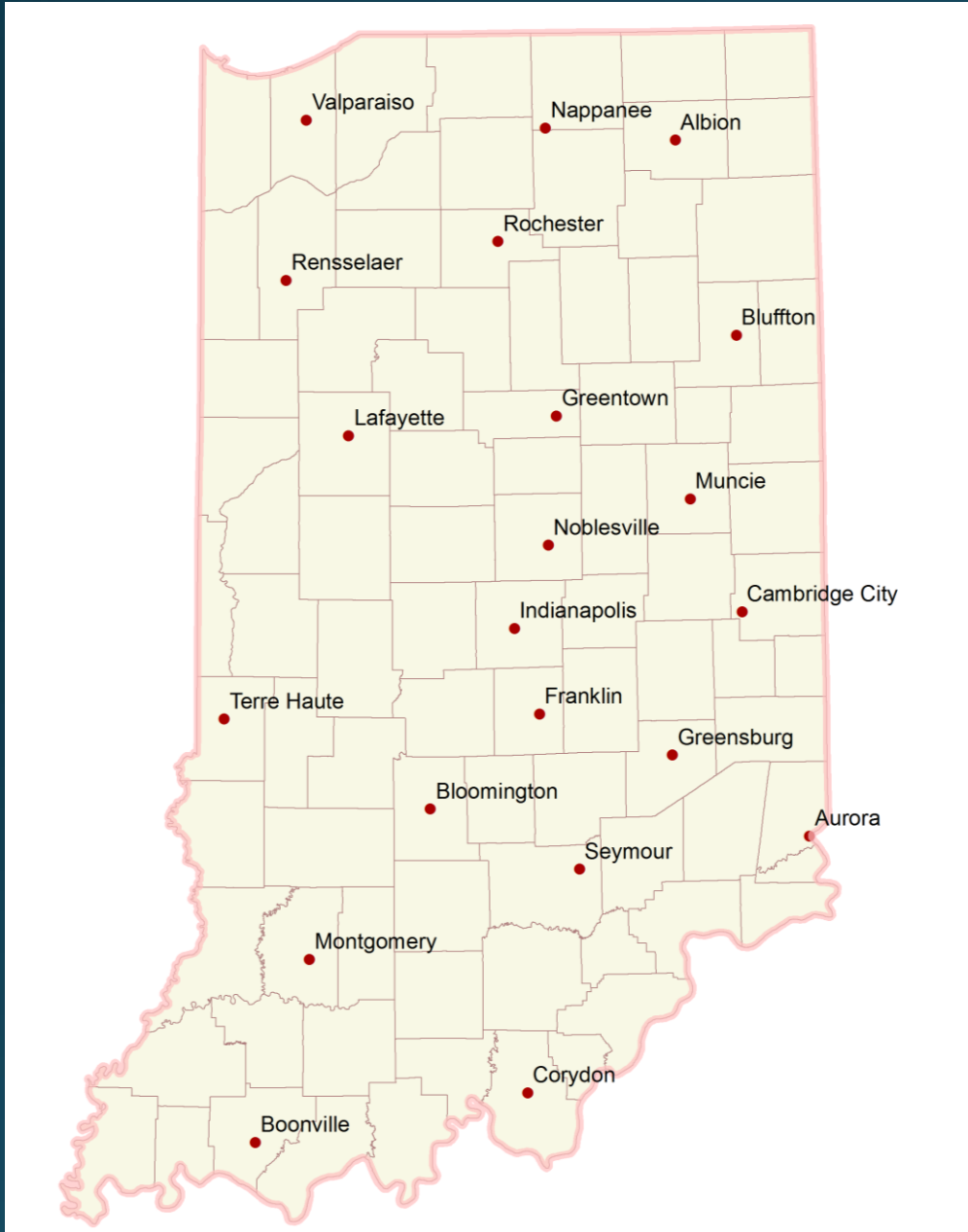
College of Agriculture



# 1. Location of Forums



- Five Extension Districts in Indiana
- District Directors asked to Recommend Four Sites in their Districts
- Opted to have one additional forum in the Indianapolis area, the largest city in the state
- End result – plans to host 21 Extension forums
- This complemented the 6 listening sessions hosted by the Dean of Agriculture in 6 urban sites.



# Map of the 21 Community Forum Locations

## 2. Forum Methodology

- Employed the World Café Format
- Four rounds over the course of the meeting
- People asked rotate to different tables for 3 of the 4 rounds
- Highly interactive process



### 3. Who to Invite

“We have named these ‘Community Forums’ for a reason. They should fairly represent your community. When thinking about whom to invite, consider a diverse reflection of those who call your area home. This means a healthy blend of current core stakeholders **and** those who may have less experience with, or knowledge of, Purdue Extension. . . .”

Jason Henderson  
Director, Purdue Extension





## 4. Key Forum Roles



- Forum Facilitator
- Table Facilitator
- Table Recorder and Reporter
- Roundtable Participants

# 5. Getting Ready: Forum Facilitator Training



## PURDUE EXTENSION COMMUNITY FORUM

**PURDUE** | **LOCAL FACES**  
EXTENSION | COUNTLESS CONNECTIONS

### **Webinar Training**

January 6, 2015

Background  
Information for  
Meeting  
Facilitators

# 6. Host Forums: Agenda at a Glance

(held during the January-March 2015 period)

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Purpose of the Community Forum**

**Video of Jason Henderson, Director of Purdue Extension**

**Overview of the Forum Format**

**The Four Roundtable Sessions**

**Closing Comments**

# The Roundtable Sessions

## Round 1

- Children, Youth & Families

## Round 2

- Digging Deeper into the Top Issues from Round 1

## Round 3

- Community, Economy, Agriculture & Natural Resources

## Round 4

- Digging Deeper into the Top Issues from Round 3



TWO POWERFUL, OVERARCHING THEMES EMERGED

**1** Education for all ages

**2** Enhancing the quality of life

TOP FIVE PRIORITY ISSUES & ACTION ITEMS



**Strengthening Families**

- Establish a firm, positive sense of communication and connectedness.
- Encourage families to make time for meals and activities together.
- Promote the benefits of family engagement and family stability.
- Ensure that entire families understand the economics involved in supporting themselves.



**Promoting Healthy Living**

*Revitalize and reinforce the importance of healthy living through education that addresses:*

- Physical wellness
- Proper nutrition
- Mental wellbeing
- The importance of hygiene



**Building Effective Parenting Skills**

- Teach youth about the importance of responsibility and a strong work ethic
- Provide education in a wide range of parenting skills, including:
  - Strong family communication
  - Help to reinforce children and family goals
  - Child care
  - Budgeting for healthy home nutrition
  - How to be an effective role model



**Enhancing Positive Life Skills**

*Provide education that facilitates:*

- Conflict resolution
- Respect
- Decision-making
- Strong work ethic
- The importance of leadership
- Role modeling
- Mentoring



**Supporting Career Preparation**

- Equip and empower teenagers for life after high school
- Emphasize the importance of vocational skills and help all ages prepare for those skills.
- Offer education for all ages on successfully finding jobs by addressing applications, resumes, and interviews.
- Assert the value of entrepreneurship and facilitate it through education wherever possible.
- Educate all ages on how to facilitate, and leverage, finances for education.

*These forums and sessions helped Purdue Extension and the College of Agriculture strengthen ties to current stakeholders, meet fresh faces to reach new audiences, and guide forthcoming five-year strategic plans for both Extension and the College.*

TOP FIVE PRIORITY ISSUES & ACTION ITEMS



**Strengthening Workforce, Business, and Economic Development**

- Convey a continuum of the economic system — from employees to employers to the economy.
- Enhance job readiness skills such as soft skills, resume writing, landing the job, and work ethic.
- Strengthen workforce development opportunities, such as occupational training and talent retention.
- Foster opportunities for local business development and entrepreneurship.



**Expanding Agriculture-Related Opportunities**

- Create programs that help improve the public's perception of agriculture.
- Embrace opportunities in diversified agriculture, such as sustainability, new crops, urban agriculture, local foods systems, small farms, beginning farmers, and agritourism.
- Continue and expand farm succession planning efforts.



**Fostering Responsible Land Use and Conservation of Resources**

- Improve education in zoning regulations and ordinances to enhance community understanding.
- Boost awareness of natural resources and how they relate to conservation and the environment.
- Create programs to help maintain or improve soil health and the quality and availability of water resources.



**Creating Quality Communities**

- Design and deliver educational programs that emphasize the importance of quality places.
- Focus on necessary infrastructure for quality places, such as trails, recreation, healthcare, roads, and policy options.



**Increasing Civic Participation and Local Government Education**

- Build strong partnerships to advance civic engagement, community pride, community collaboration, and leadership development.
- Design educational programs that address property taxes, government regulations, and government finances.

PURDUE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES / INITIATIVES TO CONSIDER

- Establish new programs — or strengthen existing programs — to encourage mentoring, internships, apprenticeships, and role modeling.
- Create a series of classes, workshops, or other education outlets to specifically address these issues — whether at group or individual levels of instruction.
- Actively pursue collaborative partnerships with agencies, businesses, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations to bring communities together and make programs available to all who need them.
- Encourage and equip residents with skills and techniques so they can advocate for systems or policy changes within their communities.

- Enhance marketing and communications efforts so the public is aware of new or existing programs.

PURDUE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES / INITIATIVES TO CONSIDER

- Focus on the tools or skills communities need to acquire resources (e.g., grant-writing programs).
- Create tools that address career exploration and mentoring.
- Partner with agencies, businesses, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations.
- Encourage networking and connecting people to resources and resource centers.
- Bolster social media presence to connect more consistently, naturally, and consistently with clientele.
- Facilitate community forums to encourage public deliberation on these issues.
- Leverage existing Extension programs (i.e., Master Gardeners or 4-H) in ways that address these issues.
- Pursue a role in incubating innovations and create / expand programs on marketing.
- Promote field trips and tours related to both agriculture and jobs / economic opportunity.
- Look beyond Purdue University's colleges of Agriculture, Health & Human Sciences, and Veterinary Medicine to connect more broadly — and as strongly — with additional Purdue University partners.

# Thank You

Bo Beaulieu, PCRD Director & Assistant  
Director, Extension CD Program;  
[ljb@purdue.edu](mailto:ljb@purdue.edu)

Michael Wilcox, Assistant Program Leader,  
Extension Community Development &  
Senior Associate, Purdue Center for Regional  
Development  
[wilcox16@purdue.edu](mailto:wilcox16@purdue.edu)

**PURDUE**<sup>™</sup> | COMMUNITY  
EXTENSION | DEVELOPMENT

**PURDUE**  
UNIVERSITY



CENTER FOR  
REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

PCRD.PURDUE.EDU