

University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Climate Change Needs Assessment

Executive Summary

April 2024

Summary

This report presents the findings from a 2023 needs assessment survey of University of Arizona (UArizona) Cooperative Extension personnel regarding their interest and involvement in climate change-related programming. It provides information regarding existing collaborations, program reach, and training needs for capacity-building. The survey was conducted to inform Extension leadership about existing interest and involvement in climate change-related research and programming, as well as to help Extension faculty leverage resources and opportunities to better serve Extension and the people of Arizona.

Major Findings

- 85% of UArizona Extension respondents indicated moderate or great concern about the effects of climate change on future generations.
- Half of respondents (50%) reported that they do not currently incorporate climate change into their Extension programming.
- Survey respondents overwhelmingly agree that climate change programming should be included in the University of Arizona Extension Strategic Plan, with 83% either strongly or somewhat agreeing.
- The top concerns reported by respondents related to incorporating climate change information into programming were feeling unsure about their ability to present complex climate change information accurately (27%), not having access to climate change curriculum specific to their field (27%), and concerns about the reaction of their clientele to the information (21%).
- Generally, respondents disagreed with the statement that they had sufficient training to incorporate climate change into their extension programming, indicating a need for training and greater access to pertinent knowledge networks.
- When asked whether they see value in joining a working group within Extension to build capacity for incorporating climate change into research and extension, 71% responded 'yes' and 29% responded 'no' (n = 107).

Overall UArizona Extension personnel...

- ✓ Are concerned or alarmed about human-caused climate change
- ✓ Want to incorporate climate change information into their programming
- ✓ Need training & support as well as opportunities to bolster networking, infrastructure, leadership, & coordination around this issue

Recommendations

UArizona Extension is uniquely positioned to lead climate adaptation and mitigation efforts across the southwest U.S. due to our existing relationships with diverse clientele and communities, our experience with cutting edge applied research, and our skills in seeking cooperation on complex environmental issues. Specifically, the University of Arizona Extension Climate Science Working Group recommends:

- Developing and supporting a Program Manager position within Extension Administration that coordinates UArizona climate change programming efforts;
- Developing a UArizona Extension climate advisory board consisting of stakeholders that can guide existing and future climate change programming efforts;
- Identifying, developing, and supporting new Extension faculty positions to support inter-disciplinary climate change programming. These could include sustainability and resilience-oriented positions, such as a Renewable Energy Extension Specialist, a Carbon Sequestration and Management Specialist, and a Climate Science Agent, embedded within Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family, Consumer and Health Sciences, Tribal Extension, and 4-H Youth Development;
- Exploring partnerships with other aligned efforts like the nascent American Climate Corps.

University of Arizona Extension Climate Science Working Group:

Michael A. Crimmins
Dari F. Duval
Gregg M. Garfin
Dawn H. Gouge

Christopher K. Jones
Alexandra R. Kosmider
Ashley D. Wright