**eXtension: Capability Statement**

This statement describes the US eXtension (extension.org) web-based information and education model for support of international program development, and how eXtension can assist developing countries with establishing, reestablishing, and/or strengthening their information and education delivery systems. This statement describes the relationship between the US Cooperative Extension System and the eXtension Initiative, descriptions of eXtension business processes, development of learning systems, technical infrastructure, and human workforce interaction. A number of options are described concerning how eXtension can be utilized and perhaps even replicated by developing countries to build extension capacity.

- **US Cooperative Extension System**
  - Cooperative Extension is a non-formal educational program designed to help people use research-based knowledge to improve their lives. Together with teaching and research—land-grant institutions "extend" their resources, solving public needs with college or university resources through non-formal, non-credit programs. The US Cooperative Extension employee over 15,000 specialists and county educators. These programs are largely administered through 3,000 county and regional extension offices, and over 70 land-grant universities and colleges which bring expertise to the most local of levels. The United States Department of Agriculture - National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA), support both the universities and their local offices. NIFA plays a key role in the land-grant extension mission by distributing annual Congressionally appropriated formula grants to supplement state and county funds. Extension continues to adapt to changing times and landscapes as it addresses a wide range of human, plant, and animal needs in both urban and rural areas. Today, extension works in six major areas: agriculture, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, community and economic development, leadership development, 4-H and youth development.

- **The US eXtension Model**
  - eXtension at [http://extension.org](http://extension.org) is a national Internet-based educational network at providing 24/7/365 access to objective, science-based information from land-grant universities and partners nationwide. It is an integral part of and complements the community-based Cooperative Extension System and may be accessed via any Internet-ready device, including computers, cell phones, and PDAs. Administrative oversight is the responsibility of Cooperative Extension's
Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP). Key partners include the United States Department of Agriculture - National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA – NIFA) and the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU). Cooperative Extension Directors provide approximately $2.2M annually through voluntary assessments, while the federal government provides $1.75M through the New Technologies for Agricultural Extension (NTAE) program line managed by USDA-NIFA. Other key partnerships at this time include: 1) A Military Families Partnership with The Office of the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Military Community and Family Policy (MC & FP) and USDA-NIFA; 2) The Department of Energy (UT-Battelle) to support home energy program development and delivery; and 3) FINRA (Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Inc.) to develop an Internet-based curriculum to support farm families with investment management. The eXtension Foundation, a non-profit 501c3, supports a number of sponsorships (partnerships) with private corporations and foundations. eXtension is being developed in accordance with key planning documents, which may be found at: http://about.extension.org/wiki/Planning. For more information about eXtension, please visit http://about.extension.org.

- eXtension serves the educational needs of Communities of Interest (Cols) consisting of individuals who share similar interests, concerns and educational needs around a subject such as food safety, homeland security, lawn and garden, agriculture and natural resources, environment, energy, youth development, community development, families and health/obesity.

- Engagement with Communities of Interest is the responsibility of Communities of Practice (CoPs), multidisciplinary, multi-institutional teams of faculty, professional and paraprofessional staff, county educators, and partners who work collaboratively to develop educational programs and activities. These Communities of Practice exist to address specific educational needs and facilitate an on-going engagement with Communities of Interest (Cols). Industry experts, clientele and/or government agency personnel may also be included in a CoP, as appropriate. To date, over 55+ Communities of Practice in development and working. Specific functions of a CoP include:
  - Interactively helping meet the knowledge needs of their respective Community of Interest.
  - Stewardship of the available knowledge for their specific content area.
  - Best practice development of educational products and programs.
  - Innovation in content-area knowledge and delivery.

- CoPs are interactive with Cols using eXtension infrastructure and global social networking applications. These feedback mechanisms allow the constant improvement of product offerings by the CoP to satisfy Col needs over time. CoPs must be open to the continual expansion of their membership, as they will have members who move in and out depending on their interest and time availability. Therefore, membership in a CoP is fluid and flexible.

- There is an application process that a group goes through to formally become a CoP. The process involves identifying the core leadership of the proposed CoP, description of the CoP, description of Col, a Scope of Work, and proposed budget.
The Scope of Work describes the content to be developed with associated time lines for completion and a logic model.

- eXtension and the Cooperative Extension system has experts in all areas of outreach education, and is actively involved in development efforts with many extension systems around the world. Our expertise in program development, pedagogy, andragogy, information technologies, communications, and evaluation could be used to immediate advantage in countries wanting to create similar capabilities.
- Currently, eXtension is experiencing approximately 3.5 million visits and 6.5 million pageviews annually and numbers continue to grow with the release of new content offerings.
- Up to 20% of the traffic is from countries outside of the US.

- **Technical Infrastructure**
  - eXtension offers a variety of resources to inform audiences about the status and development of eXtension. Stakeholders may learn about eXtension by linking to [http://about.extension.org](http://about.extension.org). The blog provides links to important organizational resources, timely updates, and Ask an Expert functionality.
  - According to Google Analytics, an application used to monitor eXtension use, approximately 80% of the public find eXtension resources through an internet search, while a smaller percentage of users either link to a resource or visit the site directly at [http://extension.org](http://extension.org). Content available include topical articles, learning modules, certification courses, frequently asked questions (FAQ), Ask an Expert (AaE) and events.
  - Many Cooperative Extension committees, workgroups, and special taskforces use [http://collaborate.extension.org](http://collaborate.extension.org) to work on collaborative efforts. Also, a number of Professional Development Communities of Practice (PD CoPs), groups focusing on internal development and work-related activities (i.e, Professional Development, Brand Identify, Evaluation, etc.) use this environment, as well.
  - To register for an eXtension ID visit [http://people.extension.org](http://people.extension.org). Also, the site supports the organization and membership management of Communities of Practice (CoPs) and less formally organized communities devoted to some special purpose, organizational function or special interest.
  - Communities of Practice provide access to learning modules and/or courses using Moodle, an open source elearning and course management system. Resources for the public may be found at [http://campus.extension.org](http://campus.extension.org), while professional development resources for internal audiences may be found at: [http://pdc.extension.org](http://pdc.extension.org). Resources are offered and organized in a variety of topical areas.
  - Communities of Practice use a wiki located at [cop.extension.org](http://cop.extension.org) to input articles, curriculum materials, and related content. Content is developed collaboratively, peer reviewed and published from this site. Once an content is published it is made available at [extension.org](http://extension.org).
  - Engagement with Communities of Interest (Cols) most often occurs using Ask an Expert services. The Ask an Expert System at
http://www.extension.org/aae/incoming directs the question to an appropriate expert and allows them to respond to it, redirect it to a colleague and contribute it to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) system for review by fellow CoP members.

- The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) system at http://faq.extension.org/ is used by CoPs to manage, peer review and publish FAQs.
- CoPs use http://events.extension.org/ to submit calendar events and tag them according to subject matter area and location.
- eXtension conducts regular professional development programs on a variety of topics including how to use eXtension tools and services, trends in information technology, social media, and more. A list of recorded programs may be found at: http://about.extension.org/wiki/Recordings_of_eXtension_Professional_Development_Sessions. Adobe Connect is used to support web conferences and chat programming with both internal and external audiences. Communities of Practice use this technology to organize and manage their activities, as well as develop programs for Communities of Interest.
- Today, social media is being used by many Communities of Practice to engage with their Communities of Interest. They are using applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Slideshare, FriendFeed, and more.
- Key applications are now being made mobile ready to support browser independent access.

**Human Infrastructure**

- eXtension leadership has worked diligently to recruit and hire innovative and high-quality people to lead the initiative. Today, eXtension employs a total of 17 FTEs spread across 22 individuals. These individuals represent the “best of the best” in their fields in which they provide leadership for the initiative. Work areas include:
  - Administration (e.g., leadership, management, financial, legal)
  - Information Technology
  - Content Development
  - Communications and Marketing
  - Corporate Development
  - Evaluation
  - Professional Development
  - Social Media Development
- eXtension enjoys a strong volunteer base of support and involvement in the initiative through the creation and action of various advisory committees, governance bodies, work teams and ad hoc groups. The voluntary participation of so many land grant university personnel has grown eXtension to a degree far beyond the initial financial investment made by the Cooperative Extension System. These groups include advisory committees for information technology, communications and marketing, corporate development, content development, and evaluation and research.
Institutional teams have been formed at most member universities to advance eXtension and to advocate for agent, educator, specialist, faculty, and administrator/director participation in the initiative.

eXtension is governed by a Governing Committee comprised of Extension directors and administrators representing each region plus representation from USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP), and the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU).

**eXtension Contributions to International and Global Partnerships**

Based on eXtension’s unique qualifications and experiences, and relationships with US Government initiatives, partnerships, and projects, as well as existing international development faculty within the land-grant universities and colleges, eXtension can support developing countries in a number of ways, including:

- Consult with governments, international organizations, and donor groups about different aspects of the US eXtension model such as IT platform requirements, virtual content development, frequently asked questions, ask the experts, social networking, learning module and course development, training and staff development, use of webinars, and SMS messaging to cell phones from an IT platform.
- Host virtual web-based conferencing and collaboration for delivering training workshops and for project planning and governance purposes.
- Host virtual content development through the eXtension wiki site that might involve US, developing country, and developed country content experts.
- Share relevant content from existing US communities of practice, translate and organize this information for delivery from our platform or in concert with existing in-country web services and face-to-face delivery mechanisms. Such repurposing can make content relevant for local needs.
- Host a comprehensive demonstration pilot on the US eXtension site for direct delivery of information and education to targeted groups in a developing country that might include SMS cell phone or assisting to build technical infrastructure for end-users such as producers, extension personnel, scientists, and even policy makers.
- Provide developing countries access to open-source applications that can be used and customized to support information and educational programming and services.
- Offer workshops to donors and developing countries on the comprehensive components of the eXtension model that might also include how to go about planning and implementing an eXtension-like system within a multi-country region, a developing country or within a developed country intended to serve the interests of a developing country.
- Organize or, at least participate, in a multi-lateral international partnership of developed and developing countries, and donor organizations to plan, pilot and implement a world-wide eXtension-like web-based information and education system.