EXPECTATIONS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMS
March 2013

Setting the Context
Interdisciplinary Teams are an intentional and explicit means by which the organization seeks to foster innovation. This commitment is grounded in several beliefs:

- New knowledge grows out of spaces to think differently about issues and problems
- New practice grows out of new knowledge and new knowledge grows out of new practice
- As a state-serving institution, our work can grow to its full potential when we engage all of those we serve
- The organization and the people it serves benefit from new thinking and practice
- The organization has a responsibility to support new thinking and practice

Building Organizational Culture and Capacity
Interdisciplinary Teams are actors, along with organizational leadership (Program Directors Team) in building organizational culture to support cross-program area and interdisciplinary work.

Interdisciplinary Teams will address complex, multi-dimensional issues in ways that draw on expertise and knowledge from across a diverse range of perspectives.

Capacity: Teams will seek to build capacity of colleagues and partners to work in ‘cross-boundary’ ways-including a focus on content expertise (program area/discipline).

Modeling: Teams will model the following practices (listed as a collection, not in rank order), and will share the learning from their experience with others.

- Experimentation – trying out new ideas, approaches, fostering new thinking
- Learning from experience- feedback loops and reflective practice
- Intentionally working across program areas and disciplines
- Movement toward co-conceptualizing issues/approaches
- Intentionally thinking about and planning for transitions
- Engaging those who have not been together at the same table, including across races, cultures and ethnicities that have been traditionally underserved by Cooperative Extension.
- Planning work for a statewide effort
- Communicating with the Program Directors and others on the work
- Engaging existing strengths, assets and resources in the organization

Communication: Teams will co-develop with the State Program Directors and in consultation with the Communications and Marketing Team, a process for communication between teams and SPDs about work of the teams. As well, the teams will communicate activities, best practices, accomplishments and new directions more broadly with colleagues and others through stories, impact reports, media, community conversations and other appropriate dissemination mechanisms. Additionally, teams will be expected to provide an annual report which includes a component on outreach and programming with people of races, ethnicities and cultures traditionally underserved by Cooperative Extension.

Collaborators and Roles

Interdisciplinary Team Leadership: Teams will identify a leadership or coordinating group that will provide leadership for the team. This group will also identify one or shared points of contact for the State Program Directors. Additionally, teams will develop a plan for transitioning leadership.

Interdisciplinary Team Membership: Teams will include members from more than one program area, and ideally members from outside the organization who share commitments to the work of the team. Members will include both county and state educators/specialists.
Program Directors Team: Program Directors, the PD&E staff and the Dean’s office will provide on-going support and engagement with the teams, and are committed to learning alongside the teams. One or more members from this group will engage with the teams on a regular basis.

People from outside Coop and people not usually at the table: It is an expectation that the teams will include and engage people outside the organization, including those of racial, ethnic and cultural groups that have traditionally been underserved, as side-by-side learners and implementers. This should include key players in related work, as well as voices that are not typically at the table. The teams should engage relevant UWEX resources to assist when needed.

Programming Activities

Education/Outreach: Should align with and reflect Coop’s Transformational Education Model.

Planning: Teams will develop a Statement of Intent, and will engage key stakeholders in the planning process. The plans themselves will reflect a ‘co-authored’ process by which diverse interests and voices are included and equally represented. The work of the teams should align with and work in service of Cooperative Extension’s purpose, vision and values. Plans should include “feed-back loops”… or processes by which the teams regularly get feedback about their work.

Evaluation: Teams will develop and implement a plan for evaluation. This plan should consider inclusion of a Developmental Evaluation approach, coupled with other relevant approaches such as Collective Impact and Whole Measures. Developmental Evaluation is a specific approach intended for programming where there is a high level of complexity and innovation. Each team will have one or more people with an existing understanding of this approach, who will provide leadership or coordination for evaluation efforts. That person or persons will work with the Evaluation Leadership and Support Team (ELST) and PD&E colleagues as appropriate for support. A primary focus of evaluation for Interdisciplinary teams should be on learning, longitudinal efforts and innovation relative to interdisciplinary work. The focus of this should include individual, team, organizational and community scales.

Scholarship: The work of these teams is likely to lead to innovative practices and new understandings of complex issues. Scholarship is expected and can include differing types of research (applied, action, evidence-based, etc.).

Accountability and Funding

Interdisciplinary teams report to the State Program Directors Team and are funded by the Dean’s office. Additionally, the teams will identify, acquire and infuse resources (internal and external) and expertise toward the shared priorities set by the team.

Funds will be negotiated on an annual basis and renewable up to three years, and will be provided for programming based on team plans and dependent on evaluation that explicitly contributes to organizational learning and demonstration of impact. Team co-chairs will be supported by the Dean’s office.

Allowable costs for these projects include but are not limited to: additional stipend for team members taking leads on project activities, short-term staffing for coordination, project development and support, evaluation, travel costs related to the project activities, and communication/marketing production.

Organizational Learning

Teams and Program Directors will work together to share learning and build organizational capacity related to interdisciplinary work. Additionally, both will contribute to defining success, and evaluating the effort in light of these definitions.