For more than 100 years, University of Illinois Extension has been translating university-generated research into information for individuals, businesses and communities across the state. Based in the University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, Extension provides information and education that helps Illinois residents improve agricultural practices, protect the environment, access better food, improve nutrition, develop their communities, build stronger economies, provide learning opportunities for youth, and prepare a more effective workforce. Extension programs have a lasting impact in our lives, our communities, and across our state.

In 2017, Extension educated, empowered, and engaged Illinois residents in far-reaching ways.

1.3 million participants educated
23,000 volunteers trained
60 million website page views

In 2017, Extension provided professional development to:

186 Certified Crop Advisors
10,517 pesticide applicators
1,500 local government officials
330 early childcare providers
2,123 school food service professionals
603 schools on federal school lunch standards

Preparing the Workforce

Extension supports a vibrant and skilled workforce in Illinois by providing continuing education for a variety of professions. Extension’s offerings in 2017 prepared Illinois workers to make a real difference on the ground, whether it’s the Certified Crop Advisors who manage, farm, or advise on 8.2 million acres of farmland; or the 82% of school food service professionals who plan to make positive changes after taking an Extension training.
Extension also works to prepare the next generation. Since 2008, Extension has offered over 250 Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education teacher workshops, training more than 6,800 teachers. Through 4-H, Extension creates pathways to success for youth, providing personal and professional development for young leaders.

- 96% of 4-H teens believe 4-H helps them build skills needed for future jobs and careers.
- 93% of Illinois 4-H teens say they feel motivated to impact and influence others because of their 4-H experience.
- 89% of 4-H project enrollments in Illinois were related to science, technology, engineering and math.

Protecting the Environment and Water Supply

Extension is leading the way to ensure environmental health for Illinois residents, who depend on clean air and water, healthy crops, and sustainable natural resources to thrive.

- Extension’s trained volunteers include more than 3,000 Master Gardeners and nearly 800 Master Naturalists who support community projects.
- Medicine take-back programs by Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, an extension program for coastal and Great Lakes science, safely disposed of more than 177,000 lbs of unwanted medicine, protecting water quality, wildlife, and human health.
- 96% of returning Crop Management Conference attendees say they implemented weed or nitrogen management practices they learned at the prior conference.
- Extension trained 249 Certified Livestock Managers on management of livestock waste and waste facilities to limit environmental impacts and protect groundwater.
- Over 10,000 pesticide applicators were trained in proper application procedures to enhance safety and protect the environment.
Growing Food and Alleviating Hunger

With one in five Illinoisans struggling with low access to food, Extension supports programs to fill the gap. Our agricultural and weed specialists support commercial operators, while Extension nutrition and horticulture experts, volunteers, and 4-H youth are teaming up to end hunger.

• In 2017, Extension’s Plant Clinic provided certification disease analysis for over 15,000 seed production acres.

• 3,000 Master Gardeners sustained nearly 500 community gardens, donating 60,000 lbs of produce to food pantries in 2017.

• 4-H youth have spent 41,236 hours addressing hunger in Illinois communities, surpassing 1 million meals packaged since 2014 and donating 21,804 pounds of produce valued at $37,500.

Promoting Health

Extension works with Illinois residents to prevent and manage chronic diseases, which cause seven of every 10 deaths. Our nutrition and wellness programs support individuals at every stage of life.

79% of youth in the 4-H Healthy Living Program eat more fruits and vegetables after participating and 67% eat less junk food.

56% of adults who attend Extension’s nutrition education sessions plan to make healthy changes to their eating habits.

650,952 educational class contacts were made by the Illinois Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) in 2017, improving the health outcomes of low income residents with nutrition education.
Driving Economic Growth

Extension recognizes the importance of small business and entrepreneurship as drivers of the state’s economy. Our programs help individuals, businesses and communities access the tools, training and planning they need to have a viable and resilient economic future.

In 2017:

- Extension programs helped Illinois businesses leverage more than $1.5 million, while Extension volunteers contributed hours equivalent to more than 1,100 FTEs valued at $55.8 million.
- Working with Extension, Illinois communities and organizations created 36 development plans, and adopted or implemented 34 of those plans.
- 71% of Illinois producers say they use farmdoc tools, which provide risk management information, to make farm program decisions.
- 89% of youth have thought of a business idea for their 4-H project and 17% of seniors have already started their own business.