



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

New Jersey Agricultural  
Experiment Station



**Rutgers Cooperative Extension**

**STRATEGIC PLAN  
FOR  
DIVERSITY  
EQUITY  
AND  
INCLUSION**

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Prepared by the

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee wishes to thank the many departments and individuals who contributed to the successful update of this plan.

In memory of Mary Jane Willis (1948-2015), former Associate Director of Rutgers Cooperative Extension, who for 40 years served RCE with diligence and dedication. She worked tirelessly for the national extension system and for the state of New Jersey to ensure Extension programming was of the highest quality, honored diversity, and showed quantifiable impacts.

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## IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION TO RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION'S MISSION

Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE), a unit of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES), helps New Jersey's diverse population adapt to a rapidly changing society through science-based educational programs that enhance the quality of life and bring the wealth of knowledge of the state university to local communities. RCE programs throughout the state focus on ensuring healthy lifestyles of residents; providing productive futures for youth, adults, and communities; enhancing and protecting environmental resources; ensuring economic growth and agricultural sustainability; and improving food safety and nutrition.

To achieve this mission of engagement with and service to New Jersey's extraordinarily diverse communities, it is imperative that RCE conducts its work in a manner that recognizes the diversity of its many parts, welcomes full participation by all who seek to benefit from RCE resources and opportunities, and enables everyone to reach their full potential without being advantaged or disadvantaged by irrelevant considerations.

Increasing diversity and the feeling of belonging in RCE will lead to a more innovative and inclusive organization and a better reflection of the changing demographic trends in communities that RCE serves and demonstrates RCE's unequivocal commitment to more robust engagement with traditionally underrepresented populations. RCE's long-term success in effectively addressing community needs in an increasingly complex world will rely on welcoming diverse perspectives and continuing to broaden its relationships with community stakeholders.

For these reasons, Rutgers Cooperative Extension is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in its mission and vision, workforce, programs, audiences, and in its relationships with other people, groups, and organizations.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension's challenge is to acknowledge and confirm the value of diversity and inclusivity by ensuring faculty and staff are full and influential members, by providing educational opportunities for current and potential audiences, diversifying faculty, staff, volunteers, and developing innovative programs that meet the needs of the members of our communities. The charge of this Strategic Plan is to integrate diversity more fully into the core mission and vision and to weave inclusivity into the very fabric of Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

## CONTEXT OF THE RCE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

This Strategic Plan provides an update to RCE's Strategic Plan for Diversity developed in 1993 and now aligns with the priorities that guided the University's most recent diversity strategic planning process, allowing us to chart a course in the same direction. This update to the Strategic Plan also coincides with the wider efforts taking place at Rutgers University. Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion are cornerstones of Rutgers' emphasis on fostering a "beloved community," a university culture defined by tolerance, mutual respect, diversity, and the spirited exchange of ideas. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, with public outreach and engagement at the heart of its mission, plays a critical role in ensuring that the principles of creating a "beloved community" extend beyond the University proper, and out into the broader community.

The goals and action plans contained in this Strategic Plan reinforce RCE's long commitment to working together with all community members, particularly with those of traditionally underrepresented populations, to achieve and sustain an inclusive community in all aspects of the organization including its mission, workforce, programs, audiences, and in its relationships with other people, groups, and organizations.

## DEFINITIONS

### DIVERSITY

Refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences in culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity and expression, age, religion, language, physical/cognitive abilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, geographic region, veteran status, and more.

### EQUITY

Refers to actively working to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented full participation across differences in culture and circumstance, specifically redressing the exclusion of historically underrepresented groups in higher education. Attention to equity involves ensuring access, opportunity, and advancement for all students, faculty, staff, and volunteers in every stage of education and career development.



## **INCLUSION**

Refers to the act of creating environments in which individuals and groups feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued by eliminating practices and behaviors that marginalize them. An inclusive climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions so that all people can fully participate in the university's opportunities and resources and contribute fully to the organization.

## **VALUES**

Rutgers Cooperative Extension recognizes that organizational values are important and critical to achieve and sustain diversity, inclusivity, and belonging. A culture that embraces diversity seeks to expand and leverage the representation of varied collective and individual identities, strengthening teams through creativity, increased performance, effective problem solving, insightful decision making, and authentic and respectful connection with internal and external constituencies.

The values underlying this Strategic Plan are:

- The commitment to achieve a diverse, innovative, and empowered population of faculty, staff, students, and volunteers.
- The commitment to provide an environment that promotes individual achievement and success, as well as participation in decision making.
- The commitment to achieve a diverse program audience, and to provide individuals in these audiences with an opportunity for participation on advisory committees that have input into program direction and emphasis.
- The ability to lead and model diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout Rutgers Cooperative Extension and to lead residents of New Jersey toward a beloved community.
- The commitment to enable individuals and the organization to build respect, dignity, fairness, caring, equality, and self-esteem.
- The recognition of the rights of all individuals to mutual respect and acceptance of others without biases based on differences of any kind.
- The commitment to equitable treatment and elimination of discrimination in all its forms at all levels and throughout all programs.
- The recognition and promotion of diverse ideas and human potential.

## **VISION**

Organizational structures that are inclusive create a culture of belonging, where employees, volunteers, and communities are actively encouraged to contribute and participate in a meaningful way. RCE aspires to the following vision:

### **As an Organization:**

Rutgers Cooperative Extension is a diverse organization that values, is committed to, and embodies inclusivity as a long-term investment in its future. This investment positions Rutgers Cooperative Extension as a productive, effective, and relevant organization—a role model for achieving a beloved community and to the university's dedication to community engaged scholarship and service.

### **As an Employer:**

Wherever one looks in Rutgers Cooperative Extension, there is diversity. Employees work in a supportive environment that cares about their personal well-being in which leadership, power, and influence are shared. Each person's contributions and perspectives are respected and appreciated. Systems are in place to support employees in effectively building relationships with and responding to the needs of diverse audiences.

### **As an Employee:**

Employees embrace and freely contribute to the broader organization vision and the mission of Rutgers Cooperation Extension and the University.

### **As an Educator:**

Rutgers Cooperative Extension interacts with all people, understanding and responding to interests and needs that are consistent with its mission. Since all programs effectively address community needs, people from diverse groups choose to participate.

### **As a Partner:**

Rutgers Cooperative Extension joins with a wide range of organizations and agencies to develop, provide, and evaluate programs that address issues of wide public concern.

### **As a Leader:**

Rutgers Cooperative Extension is a model for a society that demonstrates proactive efforts to prevent discrimination by eliminating barriers.

## STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND ACTION STEPS

These goals and action steps are grouped by the Rutgers University Diversity Priorities to maintain alignment with the overall University plan but are examined through the lens of Cooperative Extension scope of work.

### Priority 1

## Recruit, Retain, and Develop a Diverse Community of Faculty, Staff, Students, and Volunteers

**GOAL:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension will increase and sustain the diversity of our workforce to better reflect the diversity of the population of the state and its communities.

### Actions

- 01** Conduct an internal audit of the recruitment process to strengthen direct recruiting methods and stronger relationships with colleges and universities, including traditionally Black, Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx serving, tribal and women colleges and universities, and explore effective ways to extend recruitment into the communities so Extension, as part of the land-grant system, can provide more readily available, research-based programs and educational resources with the continued goal of improving the lives of individuals, families, and communities within the state.
- 02** Establish search committees that actively counteract structural hierarchies. Members to be intentionally invited to serve that will bring different experiences and strengths to the committee.
- 03** Continue to provide and strengthen training and resources on inclusive hiring practices. Committee chairs are expected to lead the committee in a way that ensures committee members have a voice during the process and feel a sense of contribution to the process.
- 04** Identify specific DEI and cultural competency questions to include in the application and interview process when recruiting and hiring new employees.
- 05** Collaborate with SEBS Office of Public Outreach and Communication to create recruitment and outreach materials that showcase Extension's diversity brand.
- 06** Increase awareness and support participation in existing diversity programs and provide in-service opportunities to faculty, staff, and volunteers on topics such as unconscious and implicit bias, cultural awareness and belonging, addressing microaggressions, implicit bias, sensitivity, gender identity, and expressions, creating an inclusive workspace, civility, and cultural competency.
- 07** Strengthen the RCE Onboarding Program for new employees by incorporating RCE's DEI goals, values, and diverse perspectives into the existing onboarding program curriculum.
- 08** Integrate STRIDE training (Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence) as part of the faculty search committee training and designate a diversity officer for each committee.

#### Metrics for Goal #1:

- The commitment to achieve a diverse, innovative, and empowered population of faculty, staff, students, and volunteers.
- Employee recruitment video available on social media outlets and website(s) for potential candidates to view as a recruitment effort.
- Tracking and confirmation of faculty search committee members attendance at STRIDE training and equal employment opportunity and inclusive hiring practices.

#### Resources needed:

Training on effective ways to extend recruitment for diverse hiring.

Videography support to create recruitment video(s).

Availability of STRIDE training for all search committees.

## Priority 2

### Promote Inclusive Scholarship and Teaching

**GOAL:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension will promote and recognize diverse ideas, programs, and scholarship reaching diverse community members throughout the state of New Jersey and beyond.

#### Actions

- 01** Conduct an internal audit of community member participation in extension scholarly work, outreach, and research.
- 02** Establish a committee to evaluate the opportunities for community members, program participants, and/or partners to engage and be active contributors to extension scholarly work (e.g., poster presentations, journal articles, etc.), outreach, and research.
- 03** Encourage and actively recruit members of diverse groups to participate on advisory committees to provide input into program direction and emphasis, and to develop cooperative programs with other organizations and agencies.
- 04** Integrate technology and modalities to ensure Extension programs and content is accessible.
- 05** Provide and support in-service opportunities for RCE faculty and staff on creating meaningful avenues for the development of culturally responsive inclusive pedagogy.
- 06** Incentivize research and scholarship reflecting cultural diversity across Extension.

#### Metrics for Goal #2:

- Based on findings of internal audit of current community member participation in extension scholarly work, outreach, and research, determine % of increase over 6-month and annual basis.
- Thorough review and evaluation of RCE materials online in terms of accessibility compliance.
- Identified strategies for gathering feedback from community stakeholders on program priorities.
- Utilize expertise of the Office of Academic Programs, Learning Center, and other on-campus, and off-campus resources to improve programming.

#### Resources needed:

Staff to conduct audits and evaluations, and to seek and coordinate feedback.

Resource support (i.e., workshops, small grants) for collaborations in this area.



## Priority **3** Define Sustainable and Substantive Community Engagement

**GOAL:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension will increase and sustain the diversity of its program participants and partners to better reflect the diversity of the population of the state and its communities.

### Actions

- 01** Convene a working group to assess how we collect and analyze demographic data, such as who is/is not currently participating in our programs; identify the target audience, and design and implement programs that meet the needs of those targeted and ensure programming is more inclusive and welcoming. (Language translation being a priority).
- 02** Develop a centralized system to access assessment data and resources to provide a way of identifying recurring patterns/needs across counties or multiple counties.
- 03** Identify and allocate resources for the development of programs, curricula materials, and teaching aids necessary to teach diverse audiences as recommended through the RCE Diversity Committee and extension departments (e.g., grant writing support).
- 04** Incorporate and strengthen online and in-person programming to reach a broader and more diverse audience.
- 05** Convene a working group to update and enhance the existing volunteer models and prepare ‘best practices’ resources available to faculty and staff.

### Metrics for Goal #3:

- Audit current RCE reach and confirm plan to target underrepresented/underserved groups in RCE outreach.
- Completion of a centralized system for identifying recurring patterns/needs across counties or multiple counties.
- Increase number of online programs and auditing of audiences reached through this programming.

### Resources needed:

RCE Diversity fund for development of diverse programs, curricula materials and teaching aids.

Staff to conduct audit.



## Priority 4 Build the Capacity of Leaders to Create an Inclusive Climate

**GOAL:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension will create an environment that provides leaders with opportunities to learn and develop its members, and expand the diversity of current and potential audiences and programs, to reflect the population of the state and its communities.

### Actions

- 01** Provide in-service education opportunities to promote an understanding and sensitivity to diverse individuals and groups that will increase the effectiveness of faculty and staff in providing educational programs. Such in-service will be developed and implemented through the RCE Professional Development Program with input from the RCE Diversity Committee and the Division of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement (DICE).
- 02** Create a DEI Champions Program to equip faculty and staff across RCE to actively support DEI in the workplace. Champions will consist of a team of faculty and staff with a diverse set of backgrounds and perspectives that naturally lend themselves to creativity, innovation, and inclusionary thinking to support, promote, and uphold DEI efforts and initiatives.
- 03** Provide RCE Administration, RCE Diversity Committee, DEI Champions, as well as departmental faculty and staff members, with the opportunity to assess an individual's intercultural competence through the Intercultural Development Inventory. Includes an individual debriefing on mindset/skillset toward cultural difference and commonality and creating individual development plans.

### Metrics for Goal #4:

- DEI Training/In-service program schedule available.
- Completion of IDI individual assessments. Debriefings completed and Individual Development Plans discussed with faculty/staff.
- Recruitment and appointment of DEI Champions.

### Resources needed:

DEI training presented by DEI experts.  
Funding for DEI professional training participation.



## Priority 5 Develop an Institutional Infrastructure to Drive Change

**GOAL:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension will build a sustainable infrastructure that supports accountability for organizational change. Procedures, resources, organizational structures, and recognition programs will drive intentional decision making around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### Actions

- 01** Appoint and fully involve members of diverse groups as leaders and members of advisory committees that make recommendations on the development, implementation, and evaluation of Extension programs and initiatives.
- 02** Facilitate, support, and enhance cooperative programming (virtual and in-person) with other local, county, and state organizations and agencies.
- 03** Build upon the annual award program for faculty and staff to recognize and incentivize individual and team efforts in the achievement of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 04** Develop and maintain a dashboard for the purpose of documenting and tracking demographic data of participants and volunteers, with an awareness and understanding of current social trends, and the impact of our outreach efforts to improve community engagement, broaden the reach of our programs and attract and retain employees.
- 05** Conduct an internal audit of metrics and review the Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion minimally on a semi-annual basis to assess progress on the recommended actions and identify additional opportunities to implement RCE's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 06** Integrate the DEI action plans into the RCE Department's strategic annual planning.

### Metrics for Goal #5:

- RCE DEI website / dashboard instituted and maintained.
- Diversity Strategic Plan finalized, implemented, and accessible.
- Annual review of DEI plan and updated accordingly.

### Resources needed:

Funding for additional recognition.

Funding for SEBS Office of Research Analytics to collaborate on the development and maintenance of the analytics dashboard.



**Notes for your plans to accomplish the goals and actions Indicated in this Strategic Plan for Diversity.**



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