

2017 County Commissioner Satisfaction Survey: CSU Extension Services in Colorado

Survey Results Summary Report

March 2018



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**

Introduction: 2017 County Commissioner Survey

The tenth annual County Commissioner Satisfaction Survey was conducted from September 18 to October 27, 2017. The design and methodology were approved by the CSU Research Integrity and Compliance Review Office in 2012. A five-point scale was used for evaluation. The variables studied included: (1) the quality of programs and services provided by local Extension offices; (2) the expertise and knowledge of Extension personnel; (3) the responsiveness and service level of county Extension personnel; (4) the perceived value to citizens of Extension programs and services; and (5) respondent insights and comments regarding CSU Extension.

Methodology

While the survey was designed by CSU Extension and the Office of the Vice President of Engagement, the survey was conducted by an independent contractor for the Office of Engagement. The confidential survey protocol allowed survey administrators to see which counties did and did not respond. Participants received a letter directly from the Colorado State University President containing the link to take the survey online. A hard copy of the survey and a pre-paid return envelope were also enclosed, offering the choice to complete a paper survey. The letter stressed the importance of the input, the confidential nature of the survey and the voluntary nature of the survey. Roughly two weeks after the initial letter, a second reminder letter and second hard copy survey were sent from the Chief of Staff, Office of the President, only to those counties that did not respond. A final email reminder was sent only to counties that had not yet responded. All results were received, compiled, and analyzed by the independent contractor.

Surveys are sent annually to all Colorado county commissioners/council members in counties where CSU has Extension offices or provides Extension services. The survey cover letter and email, however, recommend that only commissioners who have contact with and/or knowledge of CSU Extension complete the survey. As many counties appoint one commissioner or council member to serve as the Extension liaison, this means that not every commissioner is expected to complete the CSU Extension survey.

Per-county responses ($N = 51$) are calculated using the mean of all commissioner responses for that county to that question. As begun in 2010, data is reported here as per-county response. Where relevant, commissioner responses ($N = 85$) are also reported in this document. Each graphic indicates the type of data calculation used.

A total of 210 surveys were sent to all commissioners/council members in all counties where CSU has Extension offices or provides Extension services. Commissioners were encouraged to complete the survey if they worked with Extension, or to forward the survey to the appropriate commissioner contact if they did not work personally with Extension. The total number of returned surveys was 85, for an overall response rate of 40%.

The per-county response rate was 84%, with 51 of the 61 counties surveyed by CSU extension responding. San Juan, Lake, and Pitkin counties were not surveyed in 2017. Response rates by region were strong: Front Range region (Front Range urban corridor), 83%; Eastern Peaks and

Plains region (Southeast, Northeast Golden Plains, and the San Luis Valley), 87%; Western region (all Western Slope counties), 79%. Counties that did not respond to the survey were: Adams, Cheyenne, Conejos, Eagle, Hinsdale, Jackson, Larimer, Phillips, Rio Blanco, and Saguache.

Six additional surveys were received after the postmarked deadline. These surveys were excluded from the following analysis. Information from the excluded surveys was conveyed separately to Extension directors.

Summary of 2017 Survey Results

Overall, commissioners responded favorably to questions about Extension program value and quality, and agent expertise and responsiveness. Comparisons between commissioner level and county level data reveal no statistically significant differences, indicating a trend toward consistent scoring with no extreme highs or lows. Scores tend to form a curve at the positive end of the scale. Comments indicate that lower scores are likely tied to county desires for specific services and/or better agent coverage.

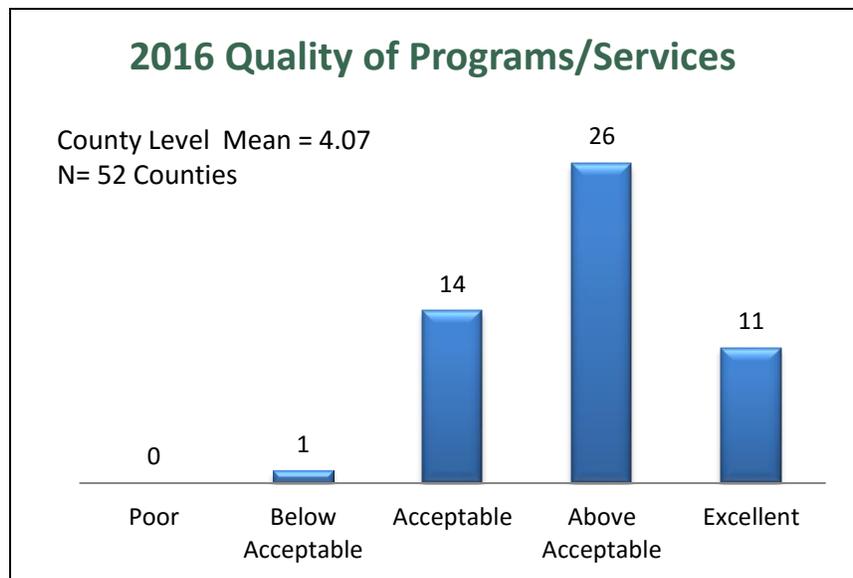
Survey Results: 2016–2017 Key Indicator Comparison of County Responses

As begun in 2010, data is analyzed primarily at the county level. This standardizes any potential systematic bias caused by some counties having a larger number of commissioners respond versus a county in which the Board of Commissioners assigns only one member to respond to the survey. This methodology levels the playing field and allows for a survey of *county attitudes and satisfaction*, rather than *county commissioner attitudes and satisfaction*.

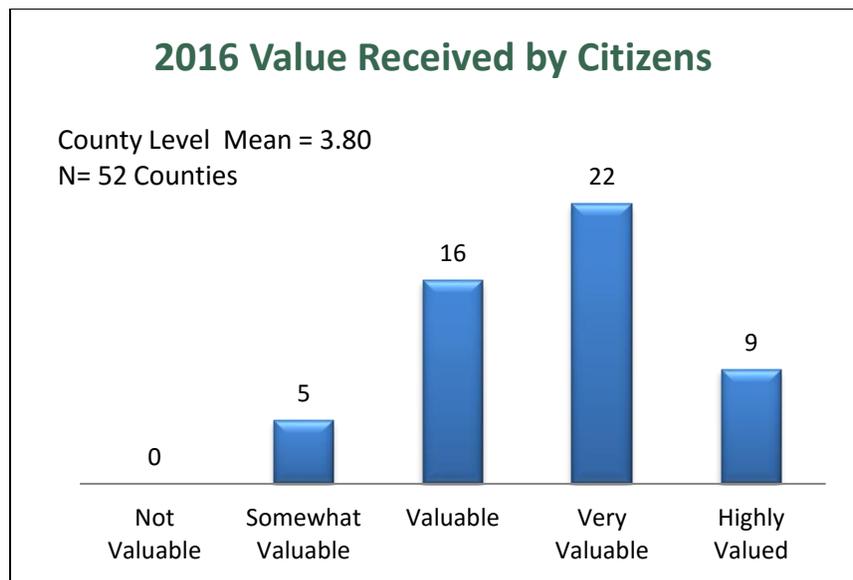
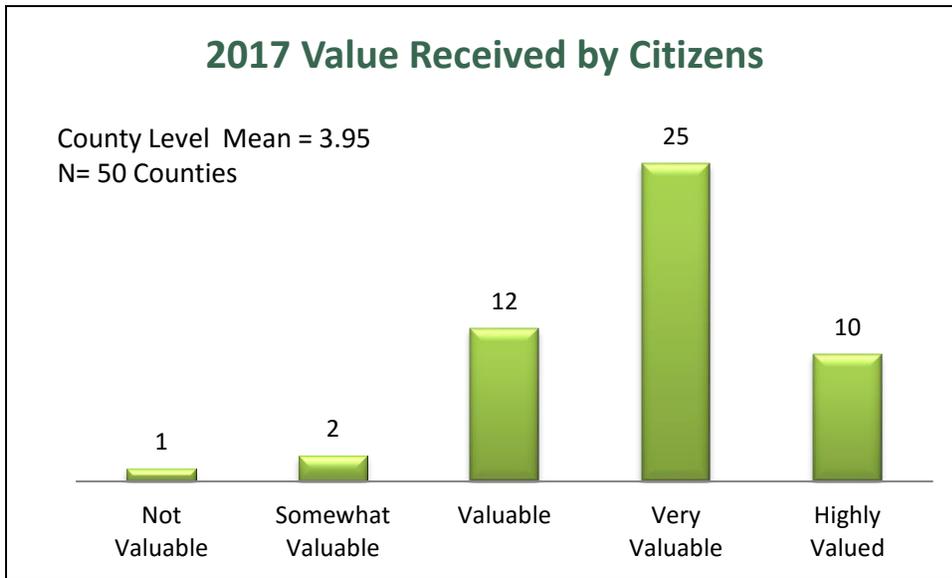
Overall, *counties* responded favorably to questions about program quality, value, responsiveness, and overall satisfaction. We compared 2017 data on four key indicators to 2016 data and found that all four key indicators for quality, responsiveness, value, and overall satisfaction trend slightly higher in 2017, trending toward a 4 on a 5-point scale. These trends can be seen in both the averaged scores and in the graphs of individual responses below. All four scores have trended consistently high since 2012.

The four key indicators are graphed below for both 2017 and 2016 county responses. This includes the “overall satisfaction” question used to indicate mean satisfaction with CSU Extension.

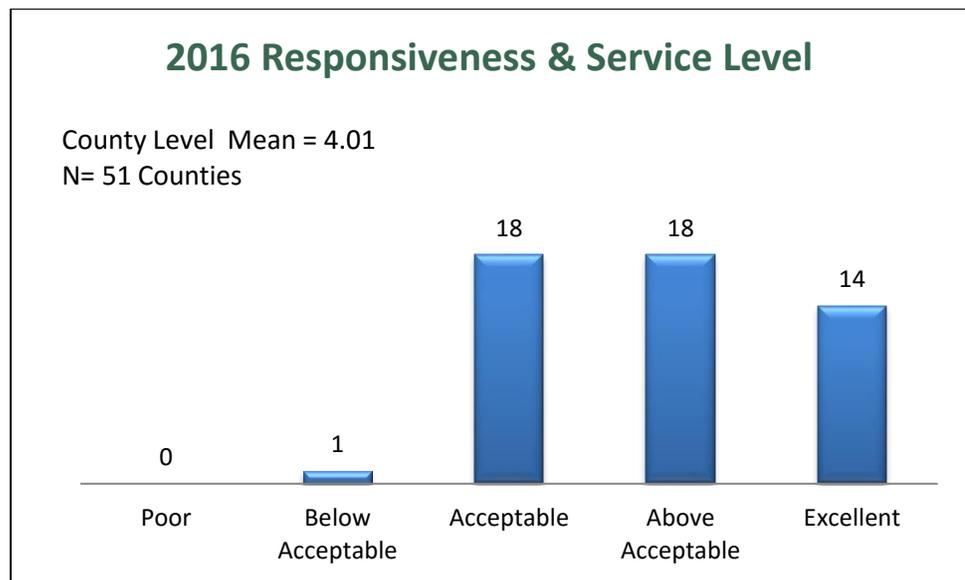
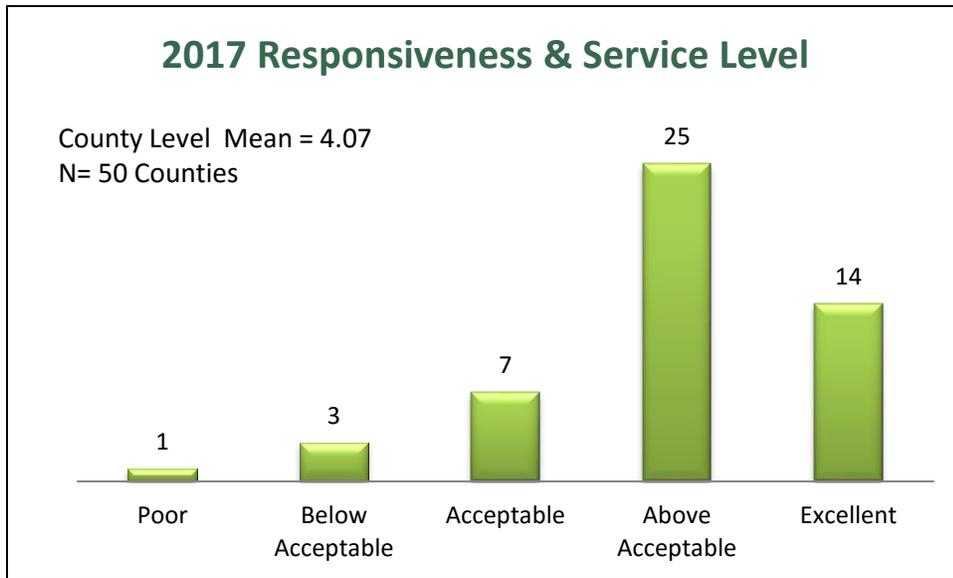
Rate the quality of the programs and services provided from your local Extension office.



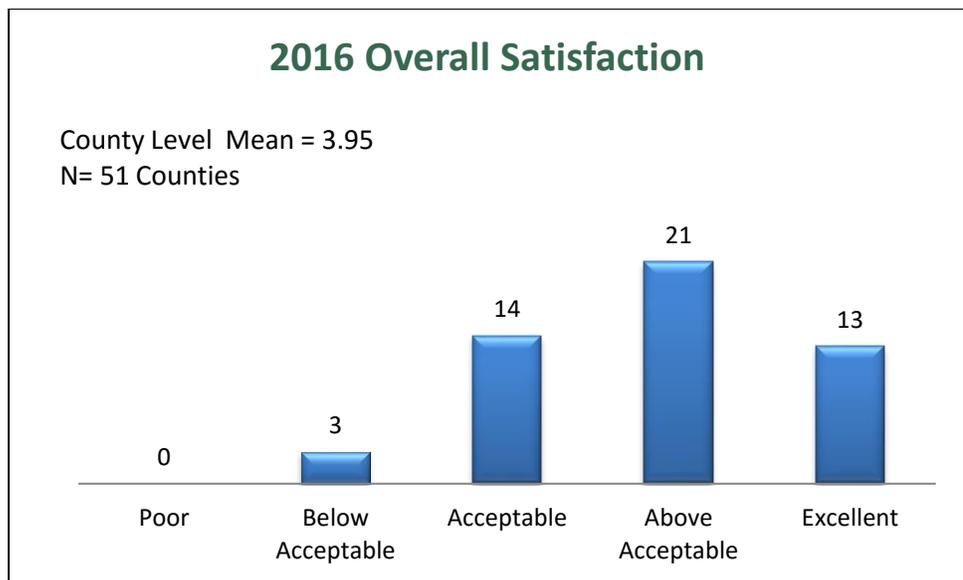
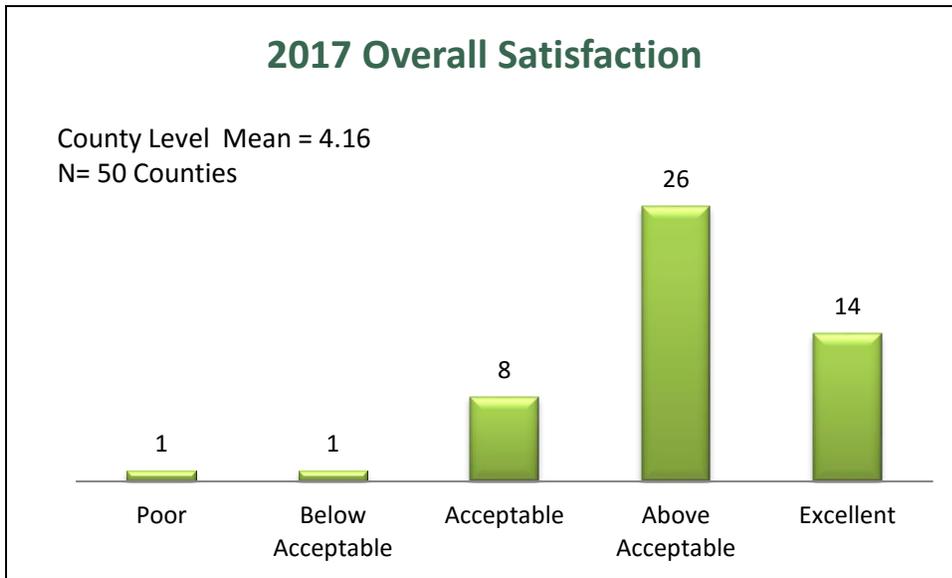
How would you rate the value received by the citizens of your county from programs and services delivered by Extension?



Rate the responsiveness and service level of your county Extension personnel in meeting the needs of your county citizens.

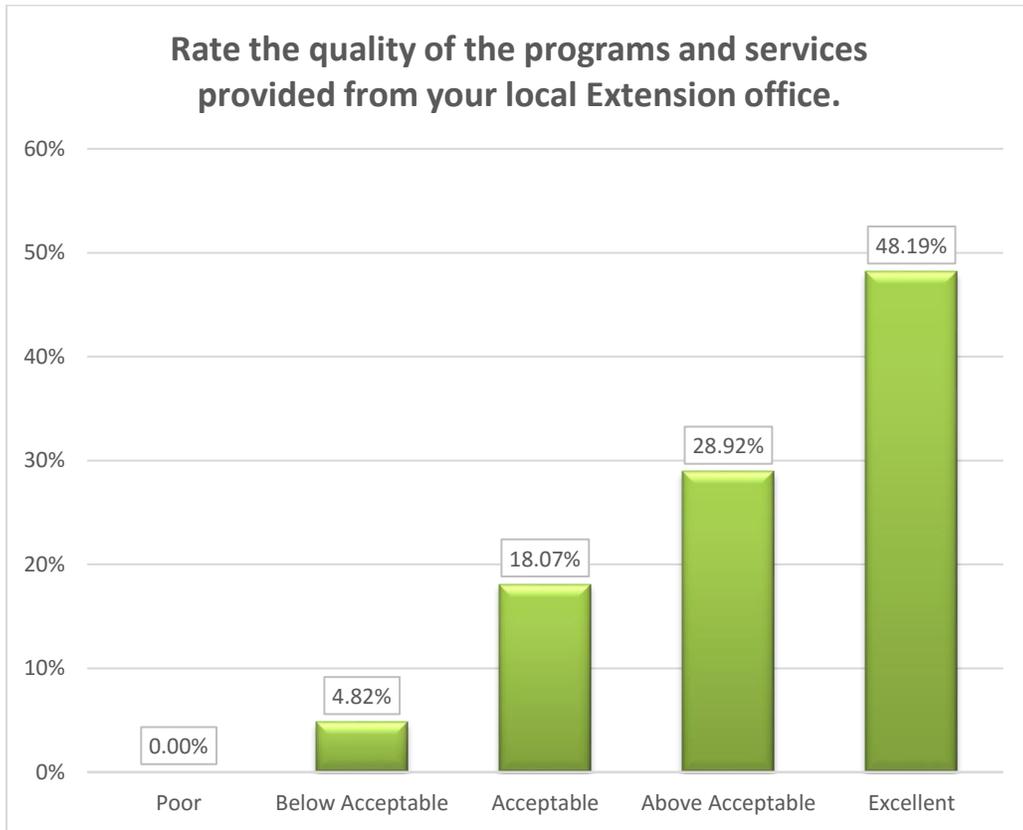


Rate your overall satisfaction with the service the citizens receive from your local county/area Extension office.



Survey Results: Commissioner Level Data on Program Quality and Agent Ability

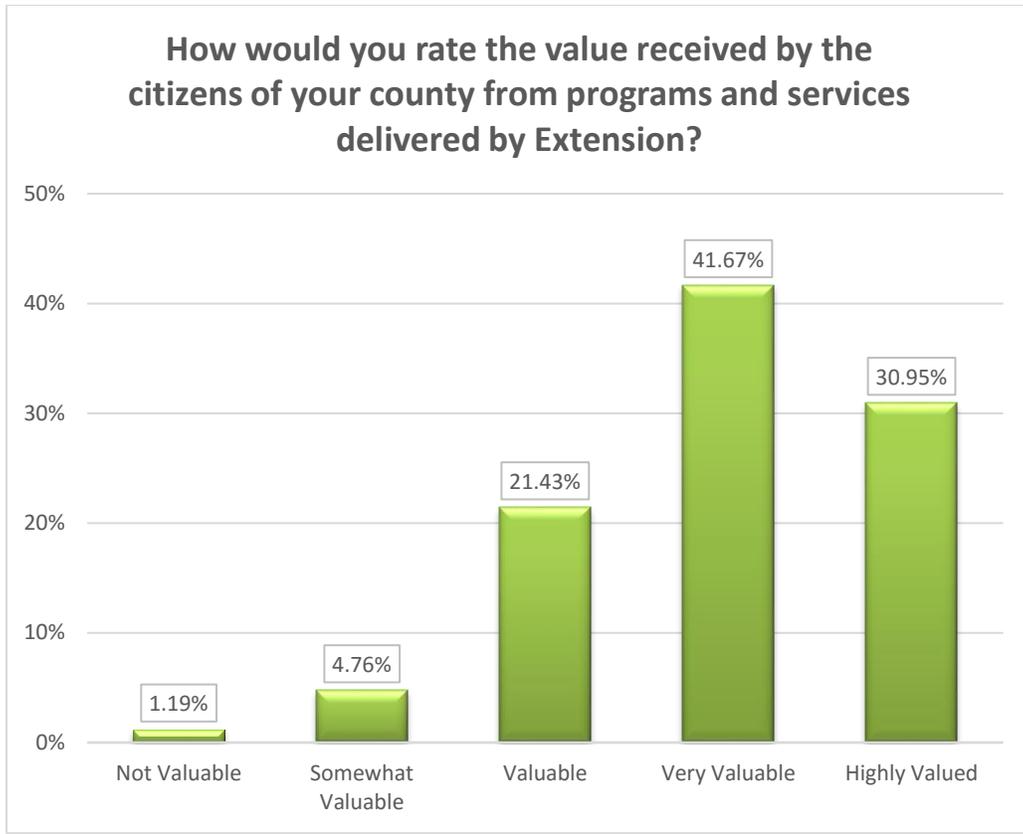
As indicated below, commissioner responses were overall positive about CSU Extension program quality and the responsiveness of local agents.



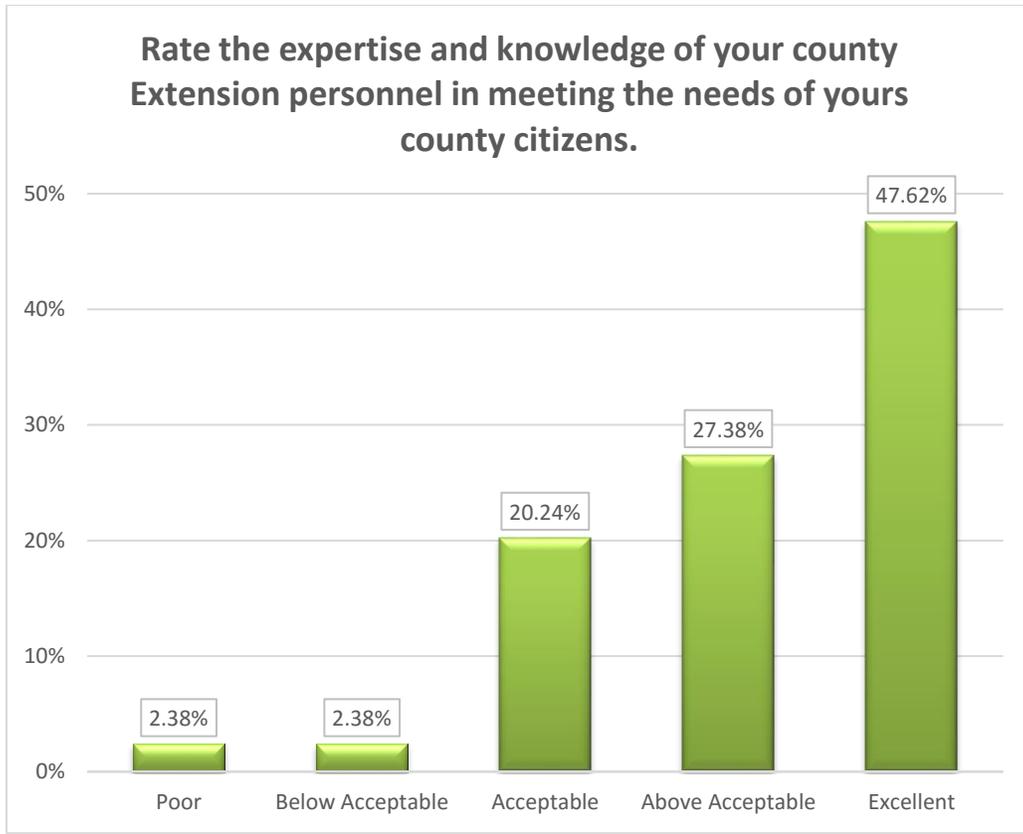
Commissioners rated the services provided from local Extension office favorably, with 95.18% rated as acceptable, above acceptable or excellent.



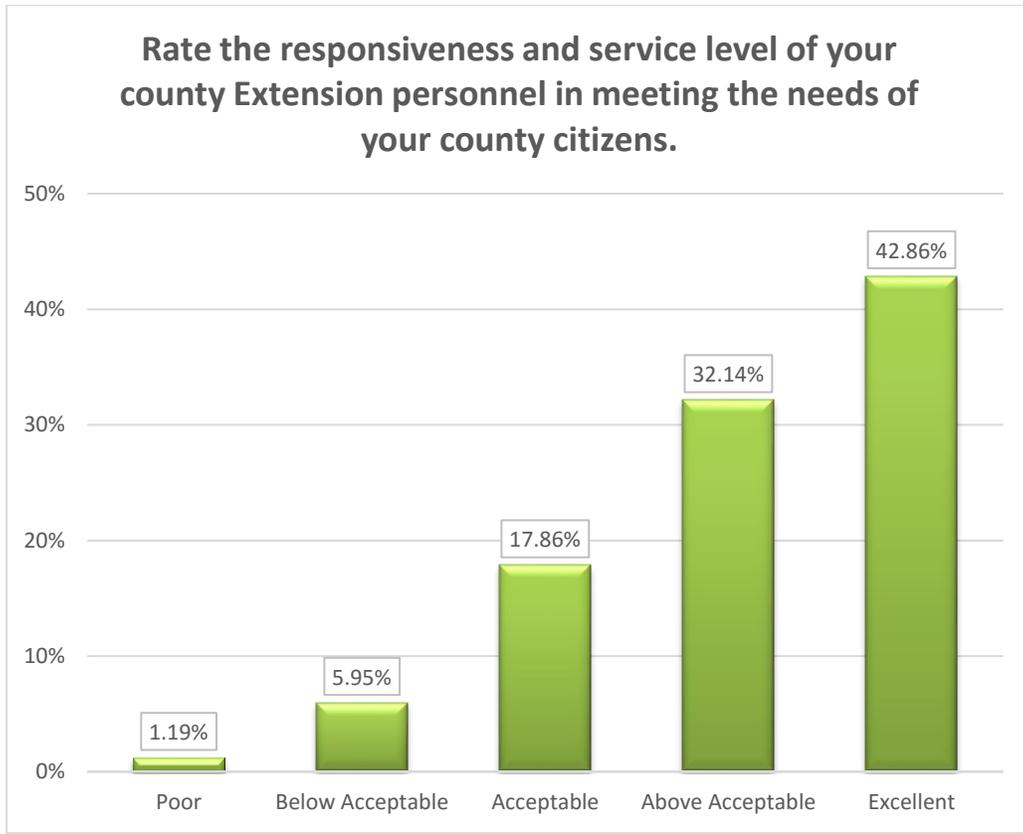
*Commissioners were satisfied with the **local offices' ability to meet the needs of each county**, with 95.18% rated acceptable, above acceptable or excellent. As one commissioner commented: "Our office is outstanding. They provide numerous programs & services that the community wants & needs."*



*The **value received** by the citizens from programs and services delivered by Extension was valuable, very valuable or highly valuable according to 94.05% of respondents. One commissioner noted: “I think without the office we would not serve our citizens properly.”*



*Commissioners rated the **expertise and knowledge of Extension personnel** positively, with 95.24% rated as acceptable, above acceptable or excellent.*



*The **responsiveness and service level** of Extension personnel in meeting the needs of citizens was found to be 92.86% acceptable, above acceptable or excellent. One commissioner comments: “Extension Personnel have gone out of their way to serve our County Citizens.”*

Regional Results Comparison: Commissioner Level Data

The table below reports commissioner responses divided into the three CSU Extension regions as percentages. As these percentages indicate, the three regions vary in their response trends. Program quality is rated consistently high across all three regions. Overall, regions are most positive about program quality and overall satisfaction; scores trend slightly lower with regard to capacity and responsiveness.

2017 Regional Results Comparison									
	Excellent/Above Acceptable			Acceptable			Below Acceptable/Poor		
	Front Range	West	East	Front Range	West	East	Front Range	West	East
Program Quality	76%	78%	77%	18%	13%	21%	6%	9%	2%
Capacity	71%	78%	72%	24%	13%	26%	6%	9%	2%
Value	82%	78%	66%	6%	13%	32%	12%	9%	2%
Knowledge	76%	74%	75%	18%	17%	23%	6%	9%	2%
Responsiveness	71%	70%	80%	18%	17%	18%	12%	13%	2%
Satisfaction	76%	78%	77%	18%	13%	20%	6%	9%	2%

Survey Comments: Kudos and Concerns

Each question on the survey allowed unlimited space for comments. Comments on local agents and offices were generally very supportive. Comments continue to report leveraging Extension resources to partner with county efforts in fire mitigation, weed control, radon mitigation, and human services. Comments also raised concerns about local and regional capacity. Several responses suggested collaborating more deeply with schools and other local non-profits to increase impact and effectiveness.

Praise for Extension Agents and Services

- “Extension in [our] county really does have something for everyone, from 4-H for children to Master Gardening for seniors.”
- “The 4-H programs are excellent and I could not ask for more from our ag specialist”
- “Our program is perfect for our community. Every program needs to be different, so that it does match the community interest and needs. The education and outreach aspect of the program is essential, partnering with schools, with existing community programs and organizations is essential for success.”
- “We leverage Extension with our open space department, health department, and human services by packaging opportunities for our county youth and to provide education classes for the under-served.”

Concerns: Staffing and Outreach

- “Our CSU Office is going through a transition The office is currently understaffed as a result of this transition and the loss of key personnel in the past year.”
- “Very short handed so do a good job with resources.”
- “Right now CSU Extension is understaffed making it difficult to fully serve county citizens.”
- “Through social media & other communication tools, better educate & engage the public in Extension programs and services.”
- “More people need to be reached throughout the county to learn about our great Extension office and their offerings. We need to help ramp this up in the coming year.”

Recommendations from Respondents

- “Encourage continued and further support for local value added ag products.”
- “Do some outreach to the citizens to determine additional needs and concerns.”
- “Increase capacity to grow 4-H throughout the county; bring entrepreneurial and innovative programming to [our] county; develop performance measures with the county through an MOU; clarify roles of the county and CSU Extension; invest in success of both organizations as it relates to Extension related programs.”
- “Help us understand all the services that are available.”
- “CSU Extension needs to review the current programs and update and change them to make them more relevant to the current community. We are becoming a more urban county and as our population grows the programs should reflect the change.”

Conclusion

2017 survey data indicate that commissioners feel positively about their agents and are highly satisfied with CSU Extension. Filling positions and continuing to consider county-specific interests and concerns through Extension programming and collaboration are items of interest for the coming year.

The Office of Engagement is working with CSU Extension to address issues raised and recommendations from respondents. This report will be made publicly available on the CSU website, through the CSU Extension and VP Engagement web pages. A link to the report is also mailed to all survey participants. The survey results are shared with CSU Extension program leaders and regional directors, to be used in planning and recommendations for 2019.