

This summary highlights Unit 20's priorities and actions for the next three years, based on local needs identified through the unit needs assessment.

Community: Youth, Families, and Resilience

- Youth lack safe, accessible afterschool spaces; homelessness among youth is rising.
- Mental health concerns and substance use are growing; crisis response capacity is limited.
- Actions: Expand 4-H clubs, leadership training, and service opportunities; strengthen partnerships with schools and libraries.

Economy: Workforce and Lifelong Learning

- Workforce retention challenges and youth outmigration were emphasized.
- Limited entrepreneurship support and mentorship opportunities.
- Actions: Deliver career readiness and financial literacy programs; support entrepreneurship education through iDream iCreate and SPIN clubs.

Environment: Natural Resources and Sustainability

- Concerns about water safety and inconsistent recycling infrastructure.
- Strong interest in community and personal gardens.
- Actions: Offer horticulture education and programs like April in Paris and Plant & Bake Sale; collaborate with nature preserves and parks.

Food & Agriculture

- Food insecurity among seniors and low-income families is growing.
- Producers face soil health challenges and drought-related livestock feed shortages.
- Actions: Provide education on food safety and food systems; support producers through Ag Summit and Annie's Project; engage youth in gardening initiatives.

Health & Well-being

- Mental health and substance use concerns are increasing; access to behavioral health resources is limited.
- Actions: Deliver SEL programs (Your Feelings Matter, Mindful Me); promote healthy decision-making through Health Rocks; partner with schools and community groups.

Cross-Cutting Actions

- Expand access through fee waivers and targeted outreach to underserved audiences.
- Build new partnerships (e.g., National Guard in Paris) and strengthen existing collaborations.
- Provide volunteer training and retention strategies to sustain program impact.

For details and registration, contact Illinois Extension Unit 20 or visit your local county office.