

Illinois Extension **ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

iHotel Champaign, IL November 18-20

11/18 1:30-4:30 PM Pre Conference Tours
7-9 PM Welcome Mixer- Tailgate Theme

11/19 9:30- 10:45 AM Welcome & Keynote
10:45- 11:00 AM *Break*
11:00-12:30 *Lunch & Words*
12:30-12:45 *Break*
12:45-1:30 Breakout Session #1
1:30-3:00 Poster Session & Break
3:00-4:00 Program Area Breakouts
4:30-5:30 Associations
7:00-9:00 PM Recognition Dinner- Invitation ONLY

11/20 7:00- 7:45 AM Yoga
7:30 - 8:30 AM *Breakfast*
8:30 - 9:30 AM Strategic Plan-Change Management
9:40 - 10:00 AM *Break*
10:00-10:45 Breakout Session #2
10:45 - 11:00 AM *Break*
11:00 - 12:00 PM Awards Ceremony
12:00- 1:00 PM *LUNCH*
1:00- 1:45 PM Breakout Session #3
1:45-2:00 PM *Break*
2:00-2:45 PM Breakout Session #4

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Relevance: Each session description is followed by a description of the role that the session has the most relevance for. This is not a restriction just serves as a guide to help you find the sessions that will be most useful.

Professional Headshots

Professional headshots are offered free of charge to employees of Illinois Extension during the annual conference each year. The photos are intended for the Illinois Extension Staff contact page. This year our photographer will be set up in the loyalty room on 11/19/24 (Tuesday) from 10-2PM. If you would like to have your photo taken, reserve your place by signing up here.

Break out session #1: November 19, 12:45-1:30 PM

Mastering Group Dynamics for Effective Meetings

Janice Mccoy, Assistant Director, Region 2

In this session, participants will learn how to run more effective meetings by understanding the five stages of Tuckman's group dynamics: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning. Discover how groups evolve through these stages and gain practical strategies for guiding your team to higher performance. Whether you're facilitating a new team or managing ongoing projects, this session will equip you with the tools to foster collaboration and productivity at every stage of team development.

Relevance: All staff who lead internal and external meetings

Inclusive Excellence in Leadership

Dr. Camaya Wallace Bechard, Assistant Director for DEIA and Amanda Cole, Assistant Director for Strategy, Planning and Implementation.

In today's highly complex and competitive workforce, how do you create a culturally competent, engaged, and innovative workplace that thrives? It starts with being an inclusive leader from where you are at who supports, promotes, and integrates diversity, equity, inclusion, and access throughout the organization. In other words, a leader that makes sure these principles are embedded in the everyday operations and the overall structure of their work environment. Bourke and Titus (2020) found that what leaders say and do, make up to a 70% difference in whether or not individuals report feeling included. Join us to learn how to unlock your inclusive excellence and lead from where you are at in Extension toward sustainable success.

Relevance: ALL

Become A Confident Communicator: Basic Tips For Promoting Events, Writing Press Releases, And Working With Photos

Amy Zepp, Media Communications Coordinator for Region 2, Heather Willis, Media Communications Coordinator for Region 3, Yukta Sinha, Media Communications Coordinator for Region 1

You've planned an amazing event, but now it's time to attract attendees. Whether you're short on time or new to communications, you can learn how to effectively and efficiently share your event information with the public. This session will include a simple step-by-step checklist for promoting an event, along with suggestions for post-event communication strategies. Additionally, you'll learn how to craft a basic press release, work with photos, utilize social media, and tailor your message to your audience—all while being mindful of accessibility. By the end of this session, you'll have practical tips to create clear, compelling marketing and communication materials that make an impact.

Relevance: This session is ideal for those responsible for promoting events, including those new to communications or looking to streamline their promotional efforts.

Chemical Trespass: A Warning And A Way Forward

Dr. Adam Davis, Professor and Head, Department of Crop Sciences, UIUC

Chemical trespass' describes the unintentional and unsanctioned movement of substances from agricultural operations into surrounding environments. Public concern over widespread and highly visible damage to plants in both agricultural and non-agricultural systems due to off-site movement of plant growth regulator herbicides has gained national attention over the past few years, but this is just the latest example of a decades-long pattern of chemical trespass from agricultural systems. A productive path forward will include both short-term tactics and longer-term, more systemic, solutions.

Relevance: AAB Team

Hold That Thought – Memory and Health

Molly Hofer, Family Life Educator, Tessa Hobbs-Curley, Family Life Educator

Have you ever gone into a room and forgotten why you went in there? If your answer is “yes,” you are not alone. Memory does change as we age, but forgetfulness is common for people at all stages of life. In this session you will learn about the memory process, including types of memory, and lifestyle factors that contribute to brain health.

Relevance: All Staff

Actions Speak LONGER than Words

Presenters: Heather Coyle, County Director; Mike Delany, CED Educator; Peggy Anesi, NREE Educator; and Abigail Nelson, 4-H Educator for Schools and New Audiences

Most people are familiar with the saying, "Actions speak louder than words!" However, when it comes to working with county boards and elected officials, the reality is that "Actions can speak LONGER than words!" In this session, the Unit 2 County Director, along with CED, NREE, and 4-H Educators, will share their experiences engaging elected officials in programming that has increased Extension advocacy. This engagement has resulted in stronger relationships with county officials and Extension partners, laying a foundation for future policy development, systemic improvements, and environmental changes. Attendees will be invited to share their own examples and explore how these strategies might enhance the sustainability of their unit plans.

Relevance: County Directors and Program staff

Mastering Physical Presence: Balancing Confidence, Warmth, and Effective Communication

Jenni Steck, MFA, MS, CCC-SLP, Owner, Jenni Steck Voice & Speech Services

In this interactive session, we will explore the immediate impact of your physical presence on how others perceive you. How do you carry yourself? How do you move in a given space? Is it possible to project confidence and authority while also conveying warmth and approachability? We will also examine how body movement influences vocal tone and delivery, emphasizing how all aspects of communication are interconnected. A shift in one element affects the others, creating a holistic approach to effective communication.

Relevance: All staff

Moodle + EWM + You = Extension’s Superpower

Adena Wilson, Online Instructional Services Manager, Stephanie Kaufmann, Online Education Coordinator, Jason Frye, Web Applications Development Manager

The Online Learning Team and Web Dev Team have implemented several exciting updates to Learn @ Illinois Extension (Extension’s learning management system built on the Moodle platform). These

updates include a revamped login page, the integration of EWM registration for course enrollment, a new plugin to track in-person attendance, an upgraded platform for certificates and badges, a reminder plugin for students, the accessibility toolkit, and more! Whether you're an experienced instructor or just getting started, we invite you to join us.

Relevance: Educators or Staff who create content on Moodle

Breaking Barriers: Understanding How To Address Disparities In Priority Populations

Dr. Margarita Teran, Assistant Dean & Program Leader, Integrated Health Disparities, Andrea Fanta, Mental Health Specialist, Integrated Health Disparities, Caitlin Fredericks, Physical Health Specialist, Integrated Health Disparities

The program leader and specialists of the Integrated Health Disparities team will explore the critical role of the social determinants of health in shaping extension programming to align with the new strategic plan initiatives. Attendees will gain practical insights on how to apply a disparities framework to their programs, allowing them to better reach and serve priority populations with greater impact.

Relevance: All Staff

Break out session #2: November 20, 10:00-10:45 AM

Tools to Improve Collaboration and Productivity

Dan Horn, IT Technology Training Specialist, Gavin Flure, Senior IT Analyst, Shauna Sargent, Senior IT Analyst

Many of the tools you use every day have options available to help make your work easier. Learn ways to simplify scheduling meetings, use Teams features more effectively and other tips to help improve working together.

Relevance: ALL

Getting Acquainted with Your Funds

Daniel Malacara, Assistant Director for Budget & Finance, Molly Cooper, Business Operations Manager

Daniel and Molly will review the most commonly used funds used to support your Extension operations, including Smith-Lever, Trust (counties), Self-Supporting and In/Out (county operations). They will review how these funds are used to support unit operations, including allowability/un-allowability of costs. Special attention will be paid to Self-Supporting and In/Out accounts. Bring your laptops so you can participate.

Relevance: Office Support with Fiscal responsibilities

Real Colors Comfort: Let's Talk About Your Primary Color

Emily Harmon, Family Life Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences, Alexa McCoy, Integrated Health Disparities Educator, Integrated Health Disparities.

In this session, participants will gain fresh perspectives on their strengths and weaknesses through the lens of their Real Color. They will develop a deeper understanding and respect for their colleagues, along with improved communication, problem-solving, and collaboration skills. This session offers participants the chance to actively listen and explore new ways to support peers within their unit.

Also, participants will have the chance to share their support ideas directly with Extension Leadership. We aim to foster a safe, welcoming, and healthy environment where everyone can freely express themselves, guided by their Real Color insights.

Relevance: All (must have completed the Real Colors Foundations training)

Roundtable Discussions

Extension Staff and ACES faculty members with Extension appointments

Connect with colleagues to explore solutions, share resources, and find collaborations to join. Engage in dynamic conversations as you rotate through three different discussions in 15-minute intervals. This is your opportunity to network, share insights, and collaborate on solutions with peers across Extension. Don't miss out on this exciting session!

Relevance: Varies by table topic

Qualtrics Tips and Tricks for Efficiency and Insight

Amy Henschen, Senior Program Lead, Evaluation & Staff Development

Discover key features of Qualtrics that will help you work more efficiently and get deeper insights from your data. This session covers how to use the Qualtrics Library, generate impactful reports, and analyze data effectively. You'll also learn time-saving shortcuts to streamline your workflow and make survey creation easier. Perfect for anyone looking to enhance their Qualtrics skills.

Relevance: Educators, Specialists and EPCs or staff who use Qualtrics to collect or report data

Understanding Digital Accessibility and Compliance

Leena Thomas, Digital Accessibility Coordinator, Information Technology, Vance S. Martin, Ph.D., Executive Policy Advisor for Accessibility, University of Illinois Board of Trustees Office, University of Illinois System

This presentation will explore the essentials of digital accessibility compliance, focusing on the legal framework and the University's support systems. Participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the laws that govern digital accessibility, including their origins, the reasons behind their development, and their implications for all staff members. The session will also highlight the University's resources designed to assist in creating accessible content, ensuring that participants are equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to meet accessibility standards. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of digital accessibility laws and practical resources for enhancing accessibility in their work.

Relevance: Staff involved in creating digital documents for public use, as well as those who support or oversee the creation and promotion of such content.

Defensive Calendaring – Your Way to Work Life Balance

Amanda Taylor, Assistant Director Workforce Development

Defensive calendaring is a technique for managing your time and protecting your schedule while still being available to others. Sometimes it can feel like our calendar is pulling us in many different directions, full of meetings, appointments, trainings, and leaves little room for creativity, planning, and somedays even lunch! This session will focus on ways to keep a balance between meetings, strategic thinking time, programming, and time for your family, friends and hobbies. Join Amanda Taylor as she shares how she has created a balance between a demanding career and finding time for life outside of work.

Relevance: All Staff

Impactful Event photography on Your Phone

Matt Wiley, Art Director, Extension Marketing & Communications

Overwhelmed by your DSLR's instructions? Just looking for the key shots to document your event? Join Art Director Matt Wiley for a fun, hands-on scavenger hunt through the conference hall to learn how to capture essential event photos with ease.

Relevance: Program staff

Break out session #3: November 20, 1:00-1:45 PM

Document Accessibility: Learning the Basics in Word

Leena Thomas, Digital Accessibility Coordinator, Information Technology

Participants will hear from Extension's new Digital Accessibility Coordinator, Leena Thomas, about her role in supporting digital accessibility within Extension. This session will introduce available resources and demonstrate how to create accessible content in Microsoft Word. As an introductory training, it will help Extension staff learn the basics of digital accessibility. While the focus is on Word, the concepts will also apply to other mediums, such as PDFs. Practice files and additional resources will be provided. Bring your laptop so you can follow along.

Relevance: All staff who create digital documents for public use

Real Colors Change: Embracing Change Through your Primary Color

Laura Holland, Office Manager, Workforce Development, and Sara Attig, Family Life Educator, Unit 12

Change is a constant and often challenging aspect of our professional lives. This session will focus on understanding how different personality types, based on the Real Colors personality test, and their approach to change. Participants will walk away from this session with valuable tools to use in their many roles and responsibilities within their personal and professional lives. Through interactive group activities, discussions, and reflections, attendees will gain insights into their own personality preferences and how these impact their response to change.

***Relevance:** Staff who support teams through change, as well as those who work with volunteers, partners, and community members.*

Digital project management tools: working together from a distance

Abigail Garofalo, Extension Educator III, Natural Resources, Environment, and Energy

Working remotely can make collaboration challenging, but digital tools like Miro, ChatGPT, and Google Suite can streamline productivity and project management. In this session, Abigail Garofalo will guide

participants through these tools, offering hands-on practice and real-world examples. The session will conclude with a case study on using these tools together to successfully manage the Everyday Environment Series. Attendees are encouraged to bring their computers for an interactive experience.

Relevance: *This session is ideal for staff looking to enhance their collaborative efforts using digital tools, especially those managing remote or distributed teams.*

Dare to Dream

Tiffany Macke, Extension CED Educator II

Dare to Dream presents a way to move from imagining the life you want to actively achieving it. This program offers a unique approach to life planning, where participants visualize their personal and professional goals and creatively strategize how to make them a reality. Sessions are virtual, fun, and interactive, fostering group support, honest introspection, and creative expression.

Relevance: All

Gateway 101 – Tips and Tricks for your Gateway Dashboard

Ramona Girtman, Volunteer Management Systems Associate

Join Ramona Girtman, Volunteer System Management Associate in Workforce Development and Jason Frye, Web Applications Development Manager, to learn more about the innovative new Gateway Volunteer Management System. We will review features to help make your life easier when it comes to managing volunteer files and tips for managing the import process. Learn how the system was created by a collaborative effort with Web and Workforce Development Teams and get answers to your most pressing questions.

Relevance: EPCs and Office Support who manage volunteers or support the volunteer management system.

Ouch that Stereotype Hurts

Janice Mccoy, Assistant Director, Region 2

Have you ever heard someone tell a bad joke or make a demeaning comment, and you didn't know what to say? Saying nothing condones the offensive statement. Ouch! **explores the impact of bias and stereotypes and teaches six techniques to speak up without shame or blame.**

Relevance: All

Charting the Course: Change Leadership

Amanda Cole, Assistant Director, Strategy, Planning and Implementation, and Bobbie Lewis-Sibley, EOA, Strategy, Planning and Implementation.

Change is inevitable, both at work and in everyday life. In today's dynamic world, thriving amidst change is essential. This session will guide you in becoming an effective agent of change. Together, we'll explore innovative strategies that foster resilience, creativity, and adaptability. You'll gain practical tools and techniques to lead yourself and your teams with confidence, sustain momentum, and overcome obstacles. By the end, you'll be equipped to turn challenges into opportunities, driving Extension toward a more sustainable future. Let's embrace change and create a lasting impact!

Relevance: All

Check Remittance, Sales Tax, and Contracts: Tips & Resources

Christine Janak, Business/Administrative Associate, Extension Business Office

Refresh your memory and learn about helpful job aids and resources for various fiscal tasks. Topics will include the check remittance process, sales tax reporting, vendor setup, lease agreements, facility use agreements, and non-grant service agreements.

Relevance: Administrative staff

Break out session #4: November 20, 2:00-2:45 PM

Supporting Neurodiversity: Empowering Individuals in the Workplace and Extension

Dr. Emily Tarconish, Teaching Assistant Professor, Special Education

This session will introduce the concept of neurodiversity, highlighting the various ways individuals think, learn, and interact. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and how they shape behavior and communication. The session will also focus on inclusive communication strategies to enhance interactions in both workplace and program settings.

Relevance: All Staff

Becoming a Strengths-Based Team

Elise Heyde, Assistant Director, Illinois Leadership Center

The 60-minute Clifton Strengths: Understanding How to Become a Strengths-Based Team helps participants learn more about the talents of others and how they complement their own. Through self-reflection exercises and discussions with other participants, this workshop curriculum focuses on using the common language of Clifton Strengths to change a team's dynamics, helping team members communicate and collaborate more effectively.

Relevance: All Staff (Attendees must have taken the Clifton Strengths test and foundations session)

Get to Know Your Audience: Communicating Effectively and Gracefully with Community Partners

Dr. Andrew Moss, Senior Lecturer, University of Illinois

In this interactive session, you will explore and practice getting to know yourself and your community partners to communicate positively, gracefully, and ethically. Although we will align our work with best practices from Illinois stakeholders and programs, we will keep it light – with some role-playing and games that will help you match your expertise to your partners' needs and expectations."

Relevance: Staff who work with the public

Unlocking Marcom Greatness In Five Steps With The Strategic Plan Toolkit

Bridget Lee-Calfas, Director of Marketing and Communications and State MarCom Team Members

We've got a decade to harness the full potential of our strategic plan. Don't miss a moment of opportunity by fully employing the resources in the ever-expanding MarCom toolkit. Bring your laptop along and learn about the campaign branding guidelines, content development, communications tone and tempo, using and distributing materials, and how we draw closer to one another and our mission through excellence in marketing and communications.

Relevance: ALL

A Practical Introduction To AI

Matt Allsopp, Technology Services Manager, Wil Bingman, IT Analyst, Jared Schade, IT Analyst

AI is a huge buzzword right now but how do you actually get started using it and what could it really do for you. We plan to explore some practical ways you can get started safely using AI and put it to work on some of your busy work.

Relevance: ALL

Empowering Volunteer Success: A Comprehensive Toolkit And Resource Guide for Staff.

Shiela Powers, Volunteer Relations Associate

Have you ever wondered where to find resources to assist in engaging or managing your volunteers? Please join State Volunteer Advisory Committee members to learn about the Volunteer Management Toolkit for staff. Also see the exciting new Extension Volunteer Handbook hot off the presses and created to provide important information for all Extension Volunteers.

Relevance: Volunteer Managers

Creating Opportunities Through Civil Rights Compliance Process

Camaya Wallace Bechard, Ph.D., Assistant Director, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access, Strategic Planning and Relations Operations Unit

In this session, learn about the purpose of the unit/office base internal civil rights reviews, your role in providing opportunities through compliance processes, and some pretty good practices for collecting demographic information.

Relevance: Programing staff (educators, EPCs, CW, specialists), county directors

Understanding Gift Funds and TED Navigation

Susan Brown, Director of Gift Administration, UI Foundation, Tamara Gillespie, Manger, User Experience, UI Foundation

This session will provide an overview of the University of Illinois Foundation and will cover the cycle of gift, TED tips for enhanced fund management, and how to get the access you need. Attendees will also explore different types of gift funds, including endowments and current-use funds, with special attention to how endowment funds operate. Guidance on leveraging Gift Administration and a Q &A.

Relevance: Administrative staff with fiscal responsibilities

Understanding New & Lesser-Known Benefits

Shante Hurd, Wellness Program Manager, Group Insurance Division at Central Management Services

This session will provide detailed information about wellness programs and services offered as an active employee through Central Management Services. It will discuss lesser-known benefits and provide information on where and how to access them.

Relevance: ALL