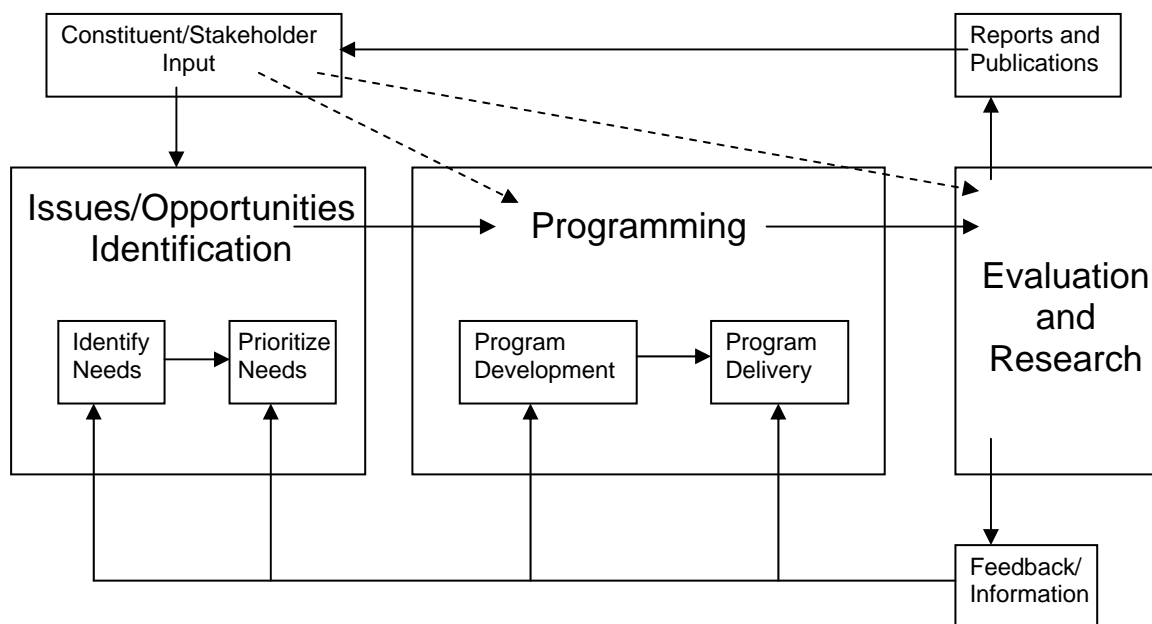


**Strengthening Michigan's Economy:  
Roles for MAES and MSUE**

**Assessing Michigan's Needs and Priorities**  
Fall 2005 State of the State Survey Results  
(12/07/05)

Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) and Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station (MAES) periodically collect information from the public, partners, and constituents to identify and prioritize issues, develop programs, evaluate delivery and impact, and get feedback on the process as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.  
Process of Issues Identification and Programming



**Identifying Public Priorities**--As part of the 2005-06 *Strengthening Michigan's Economy: Roles for MAES and MSUE* issues identification process, these two organizations gathered information about public priorities through a statewide telephone survey. The August 2005 MSU Institute for Public Policy and Social Research quarterly State of the State Survey (SOSS) reached approximately 1,000 Michigan residents over the age of eighteen. Information was collected on ten issues related to agriculture, natural resources, community development, health, family and youth. In addition, the respondents provided demographic information and indicated level of awareness of MSUE, MAES, and MSU 4-H Youth Development. This information was collected to better understand the needs and priorities of Michigan residents.

Survey questions were asked on a scale of "No Priority," "Little Priority," and "High Priority." Table 1 shows that the issues *Safe/Plentiful Food Supply* and *Youth Job Training* had the highest priority, while employment questions related to agriculture and natural resources were the lowest priority.

Table 1  
Issues Ranked by Percentage of High Priority

	Percent Rating as High Priority
Ensuring that the food supply is safe and plentiful.	80%
Preparing today's youth for tomorrow's jobs.	80%
Helping communities create jobs and be great places to live.	74%
Conducting research and educational programs to combat diseases and pests that threaten the health of plants, animals and people.	68%
Conducting research and educational programs that lead to a better environment.	66%
Conducting research and educational programs to build healthy and strong families.	64%
Conducting research and educational programs to make Michigan communities healthy places to live.	59%
Assisting farmers in agricultural production and profitability.	58%
Creating and enhancing employment in Michigan's agricultural sector.	52%
Creating and enhancing employment in Michigan's natural resource industry.	50%

Demographics were found to relate to many of the topic areas:

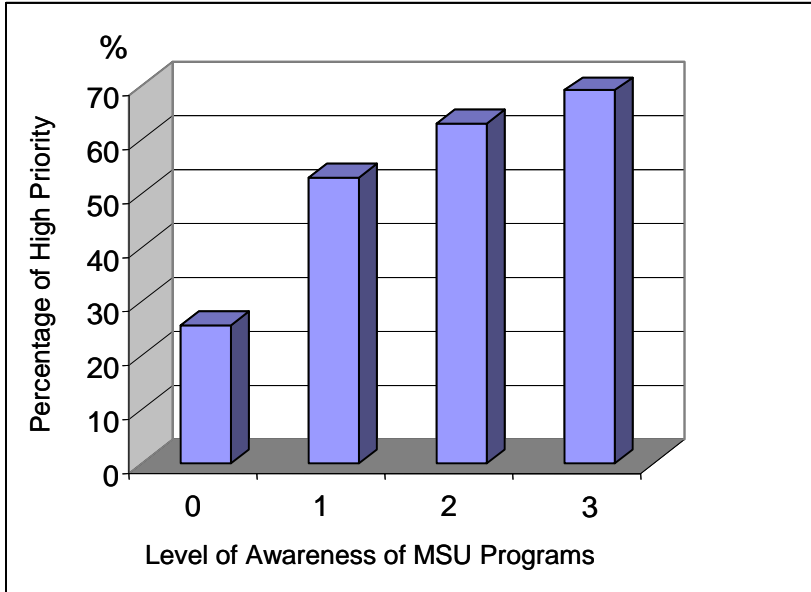
- Females were significantly more likely than males to prioritize:
  - *Healthy Family Research/Educational Programs* (72 percent compared to 55 percent)
  - *Environmental Research/Educational Programs* (70 percent compared to 60 percent).
- The age of the respondent related to many of the topics where
  - younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to emphasize *Healthy Family Research/Educational Programs* (80 percent compared to 60 percent)
  - younger respondents were less likely than older respondents to emphasize:
    - *Assisting Farmers* (80 percent compared to 60 percent)
    - *Creating Jobs in Communities* (59 percent compared to 73 percent),
    - *Creating/Enhancing Agriculture Employment* (41percent compared to 58 percent)
    - *Creating/Enhancing Natural Resource Employment* (41 percent compared to 54 percent).
- Urban respondents were more likely than rural respondents to emphasize:
  - *Healthy Family Research/Educational Programs* (78 percent compared to 64 percent)
  - *Healthy Communities Research/Educational Programs* (72 percent compared to 63 percent).

**Awareness of MAES, MSUE, and 4-H**—Here is a summary of the results on the questions asking about awareness of the MSU outreach and applied research efforts.

- The majority of the respondents had heard of MSU 4-H Youth Development (77 percent), but almost half believed 4-H was part of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and only 36 percent were aware that MSU coordinates the program.
- Approximately half (52 percent) of the respondents had heard of MSU Extension, which is a 10 percent drop from the last assessment in 2000.
- Forty-five percent (45 percent) of the respondents had heard of MSU Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station.
- Rural respondents were more likely than urban respondents to have heard of
  - 4-H (85 percent compared to 74 percent)
  - MSUE (69 percent compared to 45 percent)
  - MAES (56 percent compared to 42 percent).
- A measure of the level of awareness of MSU organizations/programs (i.e., MSUE, MAES, and 4-H) was created by computing the total number that ranged from zero (no awareness of any of the programs) to three (aware of all three programs). When the ten issues were

assessed by the level of awareness of MSU programs, the more respondents had heard of the three MSU programs the more likely the respondents were to prioritize *Assisting Farmers* (see Figure 2).

Figure 2  
Percentage of Respondents with High Priority by Level of Awareness for Assisting Farmers



**Regional Comparisons**—Table 2 shows the differences in ranking for the ten issues when analyzed by the five MSU Extension Regions. The North Region seemed to emphasize more priority towards *Safe/Plentiful Food Supply* than other regions. The Southwest Region seemed to emphasize *Create Jobs in Communities* more than their counterparts. The Upper Peninsula Region seemed to emphasize *Disease Research/Education Programs* more and emphasize *Creating/Enhancing Agriculture Employment* and *Creating/Enhancing Natural Resource Employment* less than other regions.

Table 2  
Issues Ranked by Percentage of High Priority for MSUE Regions

	State	Central	Northern	Southeast	Southwest	UP
Ensuring that the food supply is safe and plentiful.	80%	77%	86%	83%	76%	81%
Preparing today's youth for tomorrow's jobs.	80%	74%	81%	83%	77%	77%
Helping communities create jobs and be great places to live.	74%	68%	78%	72%	80%	75%
Conducting research and educational programs to combat diseases and pests that threaten the health of plants, animals and people.	68%	65%	73%	68%	70%	78%
Conducting research and educational programs that lead to a better environment.	66%	65%	64%	67%	66%	72%
Conducting research and educational programs to build healthy and strong families.	64%	63%	69%	66%	62%	49%
Conducting research and educational programs to make Michigan communities healthy places to live.	59%	55%	66%	63%	49%	66%
Assisting farmers in agricultural production and profitability.	58%	60%	69%	54%	64%	52%
Creating and enhancing employment in Michigan's agricultural sector.	52%	52%	53%	54%	49%	38%
Creating and enhancing employment in Michigan's natural resource industry.	50%	52%	37%	49%	57%	36%

Awareness of MSU educational programs and research varied greatly when analyzed by MSU Extension Regions. The Upper Peninsula had the highest level of awareness of MSU Extension and the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station. The North Region had the highest level of awareness of MSU 4-H Youth Programs. The Southeast Region had the lowest levels of awareness for all three MSU programs.

Table 3  
Issues Ranked by Percentage of High Priority for MSUE Regions

	State	Central	North	Southeast	Southwest	UP
MSU Extension	52%	62%	71%	44%	55%	82%
Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station	45%	61%	49%	36%	52%	64%
MSU 4-H	77%	81%	93%	72%	83%	85%

### Summary

- The findings suggest that all of the areas are important, with half or more of the respondents giving each of the topic areas a high priority.
- *Abundant and Safe Food and Job Training for Youth* were the highest priorities for all respondents.
- The importance of some topics varied according to demographics and awareness of MSU programs. This suggests local programming may need to vary according to the needs of specific groups.
- The decrease in awareness of MSU programs and some lack of awareness of who coordinates 4-H Youth Development, suggest the need to educate Michigan residents about MSUE, MAES, and 4-H Youth Development, especially in the Southeast Region.
- The regional comparisons show differences in priority issues and differences in levels of awareness of MSUE, MAES and 4-H.

For further information, please contact Bruce E. Haas, Ph.D., Reporting Coordinator, Michigan State University Extension by email: [haasb@msu.edu](mailto:haasb@msu.edu) or phone: 517-432-3491.