



Issue Brief 2014-02

October 2014

Nancy Shank, PhD, MBA
University of Nebraska Public Policy Center

EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES SURVEY: PERSPECTIVES FROM EXTENSION EDUCATORS

A 2014 survey was conducted of University of Nebraska Extension educators and assistants statewide. The purpose of the survey was to gain a deeper understanding of Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs) throughout all Nebraska counties. Respondents to the survey indicated that some children in their communities experience barriers to participation, communities could benefit from increased focus, schools and local non-profit organizations typically take leadership roles, and additional funding is needed. When asked to suggest one thing that would positively improve the ELO landscape, many respondents mentioned the need for more programming and more qualified staff, along with the need to have a united goal or better coordination among and between programs.

PURPOSE

There is no single source of information about Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs)¹ across Nebraska. ELOs are provided by a wide variety of organizations and have no central point for statewide reporting. As a result, very little is known about who provides programming, the state of funding, and who participates in programming. The purpose of this investigation was to develop a general picture of ELOs throughout Nebraska.

¹ Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs) are programs for school-age children and youth (P-12) that take place during out-of-school hours. Out-of-school hours programs include those that operate before and after school, during school breaks, and over the summer.

PARTICIPANTS AND SURVEY DESIGN

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension provides programs throughout Nebraska that support the development of children and youth. Their statewide presence and involvement in the lives of children, positions these professionals as key informants about ELOs throughout Nebraska. In August 2014, Nebraska's 68 Cooperative Extension educators and assistants of the 4-H program, or their proxies, were sent invitations to participate in an on-line survey about ELOs in their service areas.² Several reminder emails were sent in subsequent weeks to those who had not yet completed the survey. Of those invited to participate, 42 provided usable responses (62% response rate). Of the respondents, 87% identified themselves as UNL 4-H Educators or Assistants and 13% as City/County Employees or Officials.³

The survey asked respondents to think about all ELOs in their service area, not just those offered through Extension.

OPPORTUNITIES ARE NOT UNIFORMLY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL CHILDREN

Respondents were asked their level of agreement to a number of statements about the accessibility of ELOs. Over 90% of respondents *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* that **children in their communities would benefit from having ELOs that were more accessible** (data tables are included at the end of this report). The majority of respondents also *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* that **children in their communities would benefit from having a greater number** of (88%) and **higher quality** (85%) ELOs.

Respondent estimates of the percentage of children participating in ELOs varied from a **low of 4% to a high of 90%**. The average estimate of participation was 41%. Respondents *Agreed* that **lack of transportation, knowledge, and financial resources** made ELOs less accessible to some families.

COMMUNITIES COULD BENEFIT FROM FOCUS ON ELOS

Respondents were asked their level of agreement to a number of statements about community benefit. Respondents *Agreed* that their communities would benefit from having **community wide goals, greater coordination, information about quality, and broader community-wide commitment**.

Most respondents *Agreed* that their communities **understood the connection** between high quality ELOs and positive outcomes for youth but were divided as to whether their community had a shared vision for ensuring ELOs for children in their communities.

SCHOOLS AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE

Most respondents *Disagreed* or *Strongly Disagreed* that their communities have a **central organization** that coordinates ELOs. However, among the organizations that were identified as taking a leadership role, **schools and non-profit organizations** were most frequently named. Other sectors frequently noted were faith-based organizations, interested citizens, Extension (volunteered in the "Other" category), parents, and city/county government. Most respondents reported that their communities have persons with **political power** that support ELOs.

Respondents were asked to name entities with whom they partner: **Schools** were most commonly listed, along with **libraries, other afterschool programs, local non-profit organizations and associations, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and local businesses**. Single responses also included local

² 53 of Cooperative Extension educators invited to participate in the survey served a single county and 15 served multiple counties.

³ Some Cooperative Extension staff are employees of local governments.

volunteers, private foundations, law enforcement, hospitals, youth services, and Natural Resource Districts.

Respondents were asked to mention entities that they felt offered great potential for partnering. **Schools, libraries, and non-profit organizations and associations** were frequently mentioned. These were followed by 4-H programs, private foundations, faith-based organizations, and Natural Resource Districts.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING IS NEEDED

When asked whether their communities would **benefit from a greater financial investment** in ELO programs, 93% *Agreed or Strongly Agreed*. Only 20% of respondents *Agreed* that their communities' funding is adequate to provide ELOs for all children who would benefit.

In an open-ended question that asked respondents to describe the adequacy of funding, most respondents suggested that **funding is inadequate** to meet the needs of their communities:

"It is a constant struggle to make sure that there is adequate funding to hold the afterschool program here."

Respondents were asked to describe any innovative funding approaches their community used to support ELOs. The most common answer was that their communities **had no innovative funding approaches**. Some respondents mentioned applying for grants, and partnering with other organizations in the community to request funding and to obtain in-kind support.

When asked to describe funding approaches at the local or state level, respondents suggested **grants** for small programs, the need for **funding so that local schools** could provide ELOs, and the opportunity to **collaborate across the state**. Several participants also mentioned the desire to see greater support from the business community.

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of funding different sectors of their communities contribute to support ELOs. Perhaps indicative of their participation in Extension programming, the **University of Nebraska** was estimated to provide the highest average percentage of support to programs (M = 17%), followed by **parents/family** (M = 16%), **local governments** (11%), and **non-profit organizations** (10%).

IDEAS WERE OFFERED TO IMPROVE THE LANDSCAPE OF ELOS

When asked to suggest one thing that would positively improve the landscape For ELOs, many respondents offered that their communities needed **more programming** and **more qualified staff**.

"Training and support especially in a small county like mine, where resources and staff are very limited."

Also frequently mentioned was their community's need to have a **united goal** or **better coordination among and between programs**. The need for more **funding** was mentioned as a means for more and better programming. Several respondents mentioned the need for **better facilities** and **transportation** for students. Finally, several respondents suggested improved **knowledge about available programming** was needed, as was more **parental support**.

DATA TABLES

My county/counties would benefit from broader commitment to Expanded Learning Opportunities across all sectors of the community		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	1	2%
Agree	21	50%
Strongly Agree	19	45%
Don't Know	1	2%
Total	42	100%
(Mean = 4.4; Standard Deviation = 0.6)		

My county/counties would benefit from having county-wide goals for Expanded Learning Opportunities.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	10	24%
Agree	19	45%
Strongly Agree	13	31%
Don't Know	0	0%
Total	42	100%
(Mean = 4.1; Standard Deviation = 0.7)		

My county/counties would benefit from having greater coordination among programs that provide Expanded Learning Opportunities.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	6	14%
Agree	18	43%
Strongly Agree	18	43%
Don't Know	0	0%
Total	42	100%
(Mean = 4.3; Standard Deviation = 0.7)		

My county/counties would benefit from information about the quality of current Expanded Learning Opportunities programs.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	3	7%
Agree	24	57%
Strongly Agree	15	36%
Don't Know	0	0%
Total	42	100%
(Mean = 4.3; Standard Deviation = 0.6)		

My county/counties understands the connection between high quality Expanded Learning Opportunities and positive outcomes for youth.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	5	12%
Neutral	5	12%
Agree	25	60%
Strongly Agree	5	12%
Don't Know	2	5%
Total	42	100%
(Mean = 3.8; Standard Deviation = 0.8)		

My county/counties has/have a shared vision for ensuring Expanded Learning Opportunities for our children.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	5%
Disagree	13	31%
Neutral	9	21%
Agree	14	33%
Strongly Agree	2	5%
Don't Know	2	5%
Total	42	100%
(Mean = 3.0; Standard Deviation = 1.0)		

My county/counties has/have persons with political power that support Expanded Learning Opportunities.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	2%
Disagree	4	10%
Neutral	8	19%
Agree	16	38%
Strongly Agree	6	14%
Don't Know	7	17%
Total	42	100%
(Mean = 3.6; Standard Deviation = 1.0)		

My county/counties has/have a central organization that coordinates Expanded Learning Opportunities.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	12%
Disagree	20	48%
Neutral	4	10%
Agree	7	17%
Strongly Agree	3	7%
Don't Know	3	7%
Total	42	100%
(Mean = 2.6; Standard Deviation = 1.2)		

Children in my county/counties would benefit from having Expanded Learning Opportunities that are more accessible.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	4	10%
Agree	22	54%
Strongly Agree	15	37%
Don't Know	0	0%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 4.3; Standard Deviation = 0.6)		

Children in my county/counties would benefit from having a greater number of Expanded Learning Opportunities available to them.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	5	12%
Agree	18	44%
Strongly Agree	18	44%
Don't Know	0	0%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 4.3; Standard Deviation = 0.7)		

Children in my county/counties would benefit from having higher quality Expanded Learning Opportunities programs.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	6	15%
Agree	17	41%
Strongly Agree	18	44%
Don't Know	0	0%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 4.3; Standard Deviation = 0.7)		

The need for Expanded Learning Opportunities has increased in my county/counties over the past 5 years.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	2	5%
Neutral	9	22%
Agree	16	39%
Strongly Agree	12	29%
Don't Know	2	5%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 4.0; Standard Deviation = 0.9)		

My county/counties has/have adequate funding to provide Expanded Learning Opportunities to all children who would benefit.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	3	7%
Disagree	18	44%
Neutral	7	17%
Agree	8	20%
Strongly Agree	0	0%
Don't Know	5	12%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 2.6; Standard Deviation = 0.9)		

My county/counties effectively use(s) current financial resources available for Expanded Learning Opportunities.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	8	20%
Neutral	10	24%
Agree	14	34%
Strongly Agree	1	2%
Don't Know	8	20%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 3.2; Standard Deviation = 0.9)		

My county/counties would benefit from a greater financial investment in Expanded Learning Opportunities programs.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	2	5%
Agree	24	59%
Strongly Agree	14	34%
Don't Know	1	2%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 4.3; Standard Deviation = 0.6)		

My county/counties has/have more funding for Expanded Learning Opportunities than we did 5 years ago.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	2%
Disagree	9	22%
Neutral	8	20%
Agree	11	27%
Strongly Agree	2	5%
Don't Know	10	24%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 3.1; Standard Deviation = 1.0)		

Current Expanded Learning Opportunities are less accessible to some families because of:-Lack of transportation		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	5	12%
Agree	25	61%
Strongly Agree	9	22%
Don't Know	2	5%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 4.1; Standard Deviation = 0.6)		

Current Expanded Learning Opportunities are less accessible to some families because of:-Lack of financial resources		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	5	12%
Neutral	4	10%
Agree	24	59%
Strongly Agree	7	17%
Don't Know	1	2%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 3.8; Standard Deviation = 0.9)		

Current Expanded Learning Opportunities are less accessible to some families because of:-Lack of knowledge about programs		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	4	10%
Neutral	2	5%
Agree	24	59%
Strongly Agree	10	24%
Don't Know	1	2%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 4.0; Standard Deviation = 0.8)		

Participation in Expanded Learning Opportunities is proportionally less among:-Children from low-income families		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	11	27%
Neutral	9	22%
Agree	13	32%
Strongly Agree	7	17%
Don't Know	1	2%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 3.4; Standard Deviation = 1.1)		

Participation in Expanded Learning Opportunities is proportionally less among:-Children from racial/ethnic minorities		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	7	17%
Neutral	15	37%
Agree	11	27%
Strongly Agree	4	10%
Don't Know	4	10%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 3.3; Standard Deviation = 0.9)		

Participation in Expanded Learning Opportunities is proportionally less among:-Children from more rural areas		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	5%
Disagree	8	20%
Neutral	8	20%
Agree	14	34%
Strongly Agree	8	20%
Don't Know	1	2%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 3.5; Standard Deviation = 1.2)		

Participation in Expanded Learning Opportunities is proportionally less among:-Children who are ninth grade or older		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	3	7%
Neutral	4	10%
Agree	11	27%
Strongly Agree	23	56%
Don't Know	0	0%
Total	41	100%
(Mean = 4.3; Standard Deviation = 0.9)		

What sectors in your county/counties have taken a lead role in promoting Expanded Learning Opportunities?

	Frequency	Percent*
Schools	29	69%
Non-profit Organizations	25	60%
Faith-based Organizations	19	45%
Interested Citizens	14	33%
Parents	9	21%
City/County Government	8	19%
Business Community	6	14%
Law Enforcement	6	14%
Foundations	5	12%
Behavioral Health Providers	1	2%
Courts	1	2%
Advocates	1	2%
Other		
UNL Extension/4-H	10	24%
Libraries	1	2%
Prevention Policy Board	1	2%
Youth Services	1	2%

*Respondents were asked to "check all that apply"; therefore, the sum of all items exceeds 100%

What sectors in your county/counties are you partnering with to provide Expanded Learning Opportunities?

	Frequency	Percent
Schools	35	83%
Parents	20	48%
Non-profit Organizations	15	36%
Interested Citizens	15	36%
City/County Government	9	21%
Business Community	7	17%
Foundations	6	14%
Faith-based Organizations	6	14%
Law Enforcement	4	10%
Advocates	2	5%
Behavioral Health Providers	1	2%
Courts	0	0%
Other		
4-H Clubs	1	2%
community learning centers	1	2%
Libraries	2	5%
Youth Services	1	2%

*Respondents were asked to "check all that apply"; therefore, the sum of all items exceeds 100%

Estimate the percentage of funding each sector currently provides:

	Mean	Standard Deviation
University of Nebraska	17.2	25.3
Parents/Family	16.4	23.7
Local Government Funds	11.1	17.7
Non-profit Organizations	9.9	17.1
For-profit Businesses	5.8	12.6
Private Foundations	5.3	17.0
State or Federal Funds	5.1	13.6
Other (please describe)	4.9	20.9
Individual residents that are not parents	2.2	6.0
Other Post-secondary Institutions (not University of Nebraska)	0.6	2.3

Please check the category that best represents your youth serving affiliation:		
	Frequency	Percent
UNL 4-H Educator or Assistant	33	87%
City/County Employee or Official	5	13%
Total	38	100%