

# OSU EXTENSION LISTENS TO OUR COMMUNITIES

Findings From A Regional Community  
Engagement Forum Hosted In Stephens County



Stephens County

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## Stephens County One of 16 Community Engagement Forums Held Statewide

In spring and summer 2019, OSU Extension hosted community forums at sites across the state of Oklahoma. The forums sought to ensure that a wide range of community members were engaged so that their opinions and perspectives on important issues would be represented in OSU Extension's strategic planning.

### About OSU Extension

Oklahoma State University Extension is a thriving, sought-out, science-based educational resource dedicated to improving the lives of all Oklahomans. With a presence in all 77 counties, OSU Extension has the knowledge and leadership to help the state's citizens solve local issues and concerns, promote leadership and manage resources wisely through programs focusing on agricultural enterprises; natural resources and environmental management; food, nutrition, health and safety education; and youth, family and community development.

### OSU Extension Community Engagement Statewide Forums

#### Executive Summary

More than 400 people participated in one of the 16 OSU Extension community forums. They were asked to provide input on what they thought the most important issues facing their communities were going to be over the next 3 to 5 years. They were specifically asked about issues related to Families, Youth and Children, and about issues related to their Community, Economy (Farms and Businesses) and Natural/Environmental Resources. Based on the results of the community forums, researchers at OSU provided site hosts with results specific to their communities, as well as perspective on issues that came up as common themes statewide.

The forum results are summarized in a series of handouts and on the OSU Extension website. Extension educators will be using their results to engage the community in action planning around the identified issues and action ideas. Trainings for follow-up engagement activities are being offered to Extension educators so they will have an even greater ability to engage their communities authentically and effectively.

Results can be found online at [extension.okstate.edu/communityforums](https://extension.okstate.edu/communityforums).

# Top Issues and Action Ideas for Regional Forum Hosted by Stephens County

## Children, Youth and Families

### Promote Development of Life Skills for Youth

- Strengthen partnerships with schools and invite administrators to discuss educational opportunities
- Establish a mentorship program where local community leaders teach their skills to students
- Offer classes on effective communication
- Provide financial management classes
- Provide job readiness training
- Create more opportunities for vocational training

### Increase Access to Services and Education to Address Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues

- Provide education and training on the effects of substance abuse
- Increase support for recovery groups
- Involve kids in efforts that produce results to build character and self esteem
- Establish an opioid task force

### Support Family Cohesion and Stability

- Provide parenting classes that are open to everyone
- Host block parties to build relationships

### Continue Support of Ag, 4-H, FFA, FCCLA

- Promote agriculture within schools
- Make participation affordable through scholarships
- Invite parents to participate and teach
- Increase teacher involvement
- Partner with OSU Extension
- Work with legislators to properly fund agriculture education programs
- Emphasize the societal value of agriculture education

## Community, Economy (Farms and Businesses) and Natural/Environmental Resources

### Promote a Strong Work Ethic

- Provide training and education on family life skills and manners
- Support youth development organizations
- Recognize and encourage good employees
- Provide job readiness programs

### Sustain and Support Family Farms

- Investigate land lease opportunities
- Develop strategic plans for farmer succession
- Pair young farmers with experienced mentors
- Raise awareness about OSU Extension programs and services
- Advocate for tax policy that encourages generational land transfer

### Educate Community on Impact of Internet Retail on Local Sales Tax Revenue

- Raise awareness of how tax dollars are used for the community
- Establish a partnerships with the chamber of commerce and schools

### Expand Broadband and Invest in Infrastructure

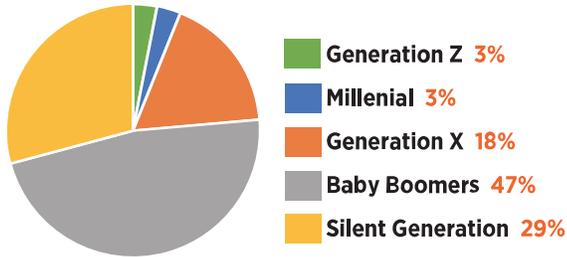
- Repair roads/bridges wear and tear
- Invest in the broadband needs of rural areas
- Encourage OSU research to be used in partnering with legislators for more funding



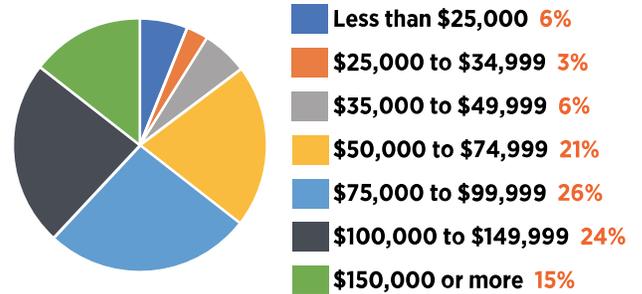
## Responses from Regional Forum Hosted by Stephens County

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

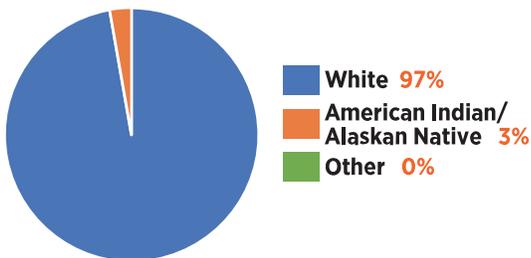
### Age Range



### Income Range



### Race/Ethnicity



### Gender



### Military Veteran



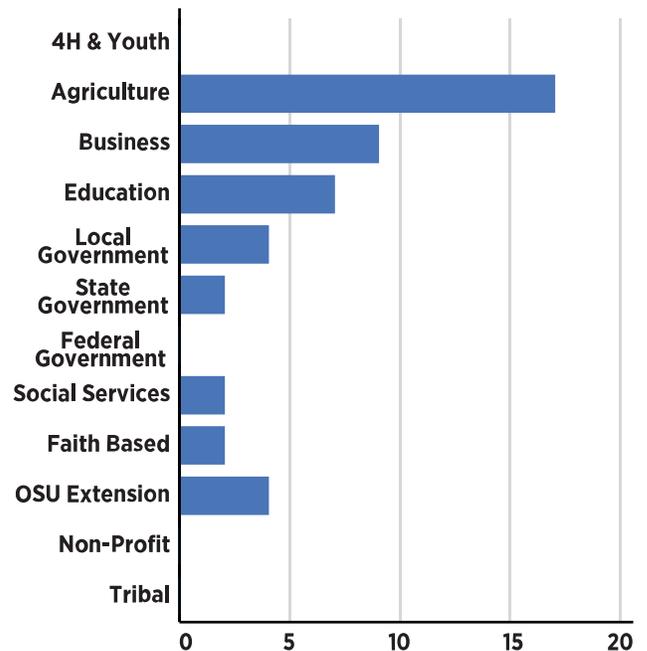
### Have a Disability



### Attended OSU Extension Program Previously



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